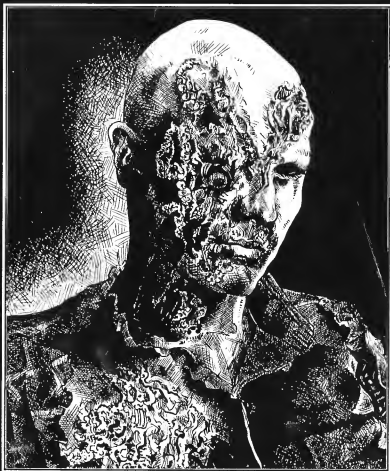


M k u l t r a

U l t r a - V i d e o

Volume two Number one

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UK US



George Romero's Dead Trilogy • Censorship
Dario Argento Interviewed • Japanese Monster Movies
Flash Gordon • Andy Warhol • Reviews



Editorial

Since our last issue big things have been happening at Mkultra Headquarters (the desk against the wall in the spare room), due in no small way to my incredible powers of persuasion the magazine dedicated to ultra-video is now available over the counter! Yep, sure enough we've doubled our print run in order to degenerate more discerning members of the public. That's the good news. The not-so-good news is that we've had to increase the cover price to satisfy the mark-up margins demanded by distributors and retailers alike. The very good news is that our subscription prices remain the same (no middle-man profits) and if you order your copies from the editorial address you still pay the ridiculously small sum of £1.10, compared to the cover price of £1.50. And we pay the postage! Well, I'm glad that's over with because I hate talking money.

Onto other things. This issue sees a number of changes, the most noticeable of which is the development of our house style, thanks to a more flexible Desk Top Publishing format. We've also managed to bump up the page count and I hope to keep each issue to a minimum of at least forty pages - not bad considering we don't have any fiction, cross-words or crap like that to 'pad' out the magazine. Being incredibly frugal with space I'm restricting the front/back and inside covers to full-page artwork/photographs, I still don't believe I can justify dedicating a whole page to an illustration elsewhere in the 'zine. Now, if we could afford to go colour...but that's another story.

I recently received a frantic 'phone call from Mario Pinelli (the incredible chap who delivered the in-depth review and photos of Fulci's Nightmare Concert in our last issue), he managed to get (twenty-three minutes of quality time with giallo maestro *Dario Argento*!

Keen to get it published before Mario changed his mind I've pulled the *Fulci* article promised for this issue. June's issue of *The Dark Side* and a forthcoming *In The Flesh* are both featuring Fulci so I thought it might be too much of a good thing and thus the king of the cannibal gut-grunchers is slated for an October appearance. Mario is also busy translating more Italian video violence for the very same issue, so look out all you Euro-bloodhounds there shall be splatter a-plenty.

This issue presents an interesting mix of stuff kicking off with Matt Kidd's article on *George Romero's 'dead'* trilogy in which he argues that the effects the films have had on the genre has been of more importance than the films themselves. Romero fans, please don't cancel your subscriptions! Seven Years On gives us background information on the 'Bright Bill'/Video Recordings Act of 1984 and author Andy Waugh looks upon the positive aspects this legislation has brought about. But this isn't the contents page! Let's move on...

As always Mkultra is looking for more contributors, we can't pay you anything (we are non-profit making after all) but you do get a copy of the issue in which your piece appears, and who knows what may follow - fame, fortune? I'd like to see more reviews, we've been particularly negligent in the bikes/drugs (sorry, no correlation intended) genres, so why not give it a go and put mind into matter. In fact you can write on anything related to ultra-video - if you've got a different perspective to offer then tell us about it! Talking of the written word, it seems my comments last issue regarding the letters page didn't fall on deaf ears - we've got two whole pages! Keep 'em coming. The tape scene looks pretty steady at the moment, I've noticed that more

collectors are hungering for Japanese Animation, possibly on the wake of the excellent *Akira*. There also seems to be less of a demand for the dreaded video-nasties - the likes of *Driller Killer*, *Zombie Flesh eaters* and all the other banned and censored tapes from the 1979-1984 era. Because fans seem to have collected all the notorious titles it looks like they are now raiding the vaults of video trash, sexploitation and related genres. This is good news because it means that more and more titles are appearing on collectors lists and everyone can get what they want - if they look hard enough! Yes, it's all out there and all it takes is a single letter. I'd also recommend checking out your local market stall that sells cheap videos, every town has one. Apart from the real trash they flog, it's worth looking closely at their selection as a lot of pre-1984 tapes are currently being sold off in bulk by the distributors to cheap video shops and stalls. Most dealers just stick 'em on the shelves so they stand out like a bloody thumb to the eagle eyed collector. Some titles have also been popping up with new covers bearing the dreaded 18 certificate - but sometimes the tape is still the uncut pre-classification version: look out for the *SID* label amongst others (they've taken over the wonderful *Intervention* label), if you spot any more let us know so we can pass on the good news.

Well, that's about it from me. If you've got something to say then drop me a line or use *The Fifth Column* to spread your uncensored feelings. This issue is for you, I hope you enjoy it.

Stay sane

Contents

Feature Articles

- 4 **Romero's Dead - Making Waves In The Genre**
by Matt Kidd
Is the effect of Romero's 'Dead' films on the genre more substantial than the films themselves?
- 8 **Scissors, Censors, Parliament and Paranoia**
by Andy Waugh
With the Video Recordings Act of 1984 still with us, Andy Waugh traces the background to the Bill and argues there may be a silver lining to this particularly dark cloud
- 12 **Dario Argento Interviewed**
by Mario Pirelli
Twenty-three minutes of conversation with Italy's most stylish director
- 15 **Selling Scanners**
by Andrej Karczewski
An insight into the promotion of Cronenberg's 1981 mind-blowing hit
- 18 **Japanese Giants**
Compiled by Peter Gunner
A listing of Japan's greatest monsters
- 24 **Four by Warhol**
by Derek Henderson
Derek Henderson dissects four examples of Warhol's extreme cinema

Regular Columns

- 22 **Open Up And Bleed** - readers put their pens to paper
- 28 **Trash File** - actor Dennis Price
- 30 **Print that Matters** - reviews of current British fanzines
- 33 **Reviews** - the best and worst of what lays on the shelf and under the counter in the world of ultra-video
- 40 **TV Syndrome** - David Joyce reviews Flash Gordon!

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With the exception of letters, please send all contributions with an SAE. All contributors receive a free copy of the issue in which their work appears and who knows, it may lead to fame, fortune...

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Romero's "Dead"

Martin Kidd dissects George A. Romero's 'Dead' trilogy



George A. Romero is a director who has produced over the past 23 years a number of significant genre films. His auteur status is confirmed by personal efforts such as *Knightriders* and *Monkey Shines*, but it is with his three 'dead' films that he has earned the most acclaim. *Night of the Living Dead* shocked an unsuspecting public in 1968, and in 1979 Romero took violence to the extreme in *Dawn of the Dead*, setting a new trend in cinema ultra-violence and giving the genre a badly needed shot in the arm. Six years later Romero completed his zombie trilogy with *Day of the Dead*, an emotional and graphic tour de force that was the result of much compromise between the director and the film's financiers.

Apart from the 'dead' trilogy Romero's work has been hit and miss, the banal directorial style found in *Jack's Wife* and *There's Always Vanilla* is contradicted by the colourful *Creepshow* and the minimally stylish *The Crazies*. Even if we ignore his

earliest work and look at the post-*Dawn* films there are still anomalies to be found; *Creepshow 2* shows us that as a producer he accepts no responsibility for the quality of the final film and his segment of *Two Evil Eyes* reveals a style so crude and cliché bound it is almost insulting. Is this the man who made *Night of the Living Dead*, possibly one of the most horrifying films ever made?

"The picture's basic premise is repellent, no brutalising stone is left unturned."

Variety, 1969

"If it's being shown within twenty miles of you, see it!"

House of Hammer

Night of the Living Dead

The success of *Night of the Living Dead* lies in its taboo-breaking

premise: that the recent dead arise to eat the living, made more horrific by the lack of any concrete explanation. Up until *Night* was released the cinema goers saw zombies as being creatures that looked menacing (*Plague of the Zombies*) but were little of a threat (*White Zombie*). It was usually in the overtones of voodoo where the chills lay, zombies were often the puppets of an evil master, rarely did they venture onto the screen of their own accord. Romero's dead changed everything - they lunged and grasped and ate anyone who fell in their path. *Night* also benefits from a tight plot and atmospheric black and white photography in which the high contrast of black and white is mirrored in the contrast of race and class amongst the lead characters. The comparison to some of the more graphic *EC Comics* have been well highlighted, but unlike the *EC* stories *Night of the Living Dead* has no moral message or reason for the characters to be killed. Particularly disturbing is the girl who dies only to arise and stab her mother,

who up until this point had been one of the films more sympathetic characters. The down-beat ending in which the black leading character Ben (Duane Jones) is shot by a posse of locals (who are attempting to kill the zombies that wander the countryside) is inspired. The effect is further compounded by the still images of the posse burning the corpses which appear under the film's closing credits; all this highlights the film's no-hope message.

Although the film is graphic inasmuch as we actually see the remains of a partially consumed corpse and the dead eating a fresh victim, the nature of the gore is much less intense than that found in the films of *Herschell Gordon Lewis*. Romero's film succeeds because it breaks two taboos - parricide and cannibalism, two horror themes that were virtually unexplored in the English speaking cinema up until Romero's film was made. The fast non-sense plot is enhanced by the various characters' awkward, sometimes simplistic dialogue. It would have been easy to dismiss the basic premise of the film if the director had chosen to explain the cause of what was happening - but lack of explanation regarding why the dead are coming back to life although hinted at (a virus carried to earth by a space probe) is never confirmed, thus the viewer is denied the opportunity of breaking any suspension of disbelief that the plot carries. Inventive and provocative as *Night of the Living Dead* was, Romero was never to recreate the originality of the first film. What followed were to be minor re-workings of the same theme, updating the graphic nature of the films to a contemporary audience.

"...Dawn of the Dead is without a doubt the most horrific, brutal nightmarish descent into hell (literally) ever put on screen..."
Dallas Times-Herald
"...the worst, most tasteless film of this, or any other, year."
Barry Norman, Film '79

Dawn of the Dead

Because of a poor distribution deal, *Night of the Living Dead* didn't earn Romero much compared to the film's considerable world-wide takings. He followed *Night* with *There's Always Vanilla* in 1972, *Jack's Wife* (aka *Season of the Witch*) in 1973 before returning to the genre with *The Crazies* (aka *Code Name Trixie*) in 1973 and *Martin*, five years later in 1978. In his absence the genre had cultivated graphic on-screen violence, and his zombie as cannibal idea had been widely copied and adapted. One of the most important films taking up

In *The Crazies*, Romero substitutes living people (contaminated by a chemical that makes them homicidal) for the zombies of *Night of the Living Dead*, but the scenario is similar with all the action taking place within a small community. Unlike *Night* there are touches of humour but the film unsuccessfully attempts to re-create *Night's* down-beat ending. *Martin* is more interesting because it has a single central character and the social issues that are suggested in *Night* and *The Crazies* become more solid. However there is nothing new here and both films survive as being of minor interest compared to more important films



Romero's zombie theme was *Jorge Grau's* blatant but superior re-working in *The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue* (aka *No se Debe Profanar el Sueno de los Muertos*) in 1974. This Spanish/Italian co-production boasts excellent photography and graphic gore sequences that still remain banned on videotape to this day. Other movies cashing in on Romero's first zombie outing include *Amando De Ossorio's* *Templar* trilogy (*Tombs of the Blind Dead*, 1972/*Return of the Evil Dead* 1973/*Night of the Seagulls* 1975), and *Bob Clarke's* *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things* (1972).

produced during the same period such as *William Peter Blatty's* *The Exorcist* (1973), *Tobe Hooper's* *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *Dario Argento's* *Suspiria* (1976).

In his sequel Romero chooses to broaden the zombie plague - now it is a country-wide, perhaps world-wide epidemic. The plot is centred around a small group who attempt to escape from the chaos that surrounds them. Unlike *'Night'*, *Dawn of the Dead's* main characters choose to isolate themselves from the zombie

antagonists, Romero sets the scene for us with a graphic storming of an apartment building by zombie-blasting troops and then soon whisks us off to a shopping mall where the remainder of the film takes place.

Romero rescues the uninspiring plot and insipid direction by adding graphic violence and gore at regular intervals and although *Tom Savini's* effects are acceptable, the sheer variety in the manner the blood was shed was something new to cinema audiences. Romero cleverly spiced the violence with comedy thereby creating a satire on American consumerism: the shopping mall zombies are consumers who are out to consume. This neat subversion was more blatant than that found within *Night of the Living Dead*, and by giving the film social comment many critics attached an importance to a film that, without the references to American life, would simply have been another horror film. What Romero did deliver was the first acknowledged ultra-violence, blood is spilled, spattered and gushing throughout the film. It doesn't matter that the make-up is clearly obvious in many scenes, the enthusiasm by which the zombies are despatched is enough to conceal Savini's lack of talent - although by sheer hard work Savini went on to distinguish himself as a leading make-up artist. *Dawn of the Dead* also features an impressive soundtrack by *Goblin*, mixed at a more intense level in the European print (by script consultant and co-scorer *Dario Argento*). The soundtrack was watered down by Romero for the American release, substituting library music (as he used in *Night's* score) for some of the *Goblin* tracks.

Dawn of the Dead stands as a film that broke new ground for the genre, it spawned a whole sub-genre of zombie films and revived a flagging market. Up until *Dawn's* release horror films were becoming thin on the ground, mostly due to the success of *Star Wars* and the slew of space films that followed hot on its heels. Ten years after *Night of the Living Dead*, *Dawn*

spearheaded a new cycle of horror films that was to take us through to mid 1980s.

"...a cesspool of vile filth produced by a sick mind for sick-minded people..."

Virginia News Leader

"...a first-rate successor to *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead*..."

Fangoria



Hot on the heels of *Dawn* came a vast army of gory zombie movies, inspired in no small way by the success of Romero's sequel. Amongst the multitude of badly filmed, poorly dubbed imports, (mostly from Italy) surfaced the talents of *Lucio Fulci* who capitalised on *Dawn's* success with *Zombie Flesh eaters* (1979) and then went on to complete a trio of gory masterworks with *City of the Living Dead* (1980), *The Beyond* (1981) and *House by the Cemetery* (1982). Other movies quick to make a few lira was the incredible *Zombie Holocaust* (1980), *Zombie Creeping Flesh* (1980), and *Zombie 3* (1980). These in turn revived the cannibal film and many blended Romero's cannibal/zombies with other genres creating strange cross-overs such as *Frank*

Agrana's Dawn of the Mummy (1981) and *Lamberto Bava's Demons* (1986). It seems that *Dawn's* constant blood spilling was the sign for other films to let the red stuff flow. The increasingly graphic nature of many horror films turned as many people off (especially horror fans of old who saw the inclusion of dismemberment and pumping viscera as a substitute for plot) as it turned people on. This was the new wave of horror. Born from this was *Fangoria*, the sister magazine to

Starlog which in turn was created to exploit the popularity of *Star Wars*. Out went the actors-as-stars way of thinking and in came directors and special effect technicians into the arena of public limelight. The demise of *Forry Ackerman's Famous Monsters of Filmland* was a fitting sign that the horror film had finally grown-up - it had become a legitimate contemporary vehicle that challenged all other film genres.

With the success of *Dawn* behind him, Romero flopped with his next feature (*Knightriders*, 1981). Undeterred he made the sure-fire success *Creepshow* in 1982 with the help of a co-operative *Stephen King*. It was after completing *Creepshow* that Romero started working on the final of his 'dead' trilogy.

M k u l t r a

The original draft, some 204 pages, is quite different from the final script. Taking the ideas of the first two films to their extreme, Day's original story involved the zombies developing the rudiments of intelligence (suggested in *Dawn*) and the creation of a society in which the multitudes of zombies are ruled over by a human elite who are served by the dead in return for human food.

The final screen version involves a group of scientists and army recruits existing in an underground bunker. Completely isolated from any other humans the tension between the military and non-military builds, fuelled by the megalomaniac Commander Rhodes (Joseph Pilato). The horror caused by the dead soon becomes secondary to the horrors inflicted on the humans by each other. The film finishes with a sympathetic zombie (Bub) showing more human traits than the crazed Rhodes and the film's good guys ending up on a deserted island, presumably free from a society which has destroyed itself. Day's original story would have lifted the film from the trappings of the first two; unfortunately Romero again presents us with the formulaic confined tension that he began in *Night* and developed in *Dawn* without exploring beyond this. To his credit the characters are more carefully constructed and the violence against them is more effective for this, but he doesn't widen the arena suggested in *Dawn* and hinted at in *Night*. Social criticism turns full circle, now he goes beyond the individual, beyond a country - the (living) human race are the monsters of *Day of the Dead*.

Lost amongst other films spawned from *Dawn* (particularly *Dan O'Bannon's Return of the Living Dead*), Romero's final instalment of his trilogy seems to have lost its bite. The make up effects are quite incredible, but to an audience that has been fed gore effects of frightening intensity since the early 1980s, it would take more than this to make *Day of the Dead* an outstanding film.



As part of the trilogy, Day doesn't succeed in resolving the momentum created by *Night of the Living Dead*, it is more of the same. Different faces, different plot devices, but it is Romero re-making the original once again. This



is a shame because with *Day of the Dead* Romero shows that he can be a skilled director, controlling the film perfectly and not relying upon the shock tactics of the first two - but this should not be surprising, he has had seventeen years to get it right.

Following *Day of the Dead* Romero directed *Monkey Shines* (1988), a psychological thriller that tried hard but suffered from an extended running time. His contribution to *Two Evil Eyes* (1990) is possibly the worse of anything he has produced to date. Looking like an out-take from *Creepshow*, the plodding plot and risible effects are presented in the style and convention you would expect from a television show. Romero's adaptation, in comparison to Argento's segment, suffers from his straightforward adaption of the Poe original, something that is acceptable in America where basic formula rules television ratings.

Undoubtedly George Romero's three 'dead' films have had a vast impact on the genre, but his work has been nothing more than lesser re-workings of *Night of the Living Dead*. For how long he can continue re-adapting his original feature remains to be seen. *The Dark Half* (1991), due for release at the end of this year, suggests that he has broken from associations with *Night of the Living Dead*, but it will take more than this to confirm that he can create by ability something which increasingly appears to be born out of chance.

Matt Kidd

Scissors, Censorship, Parliament and Paranoia

Seven years on, the 1984 Video Recordings Act is still with us. Its effects go beyond the restrictions imposed upon what we can and cannot view in the privacy of our homes, it touches upon the freedom of the individual. Andy Waugh investigates the events leading up to the introduction of the 'Bright Bill'.



"Video Recordings Act, 1984

This Act requires the certification of all new video releases. In view of the large number of titles to be classified, the work is to be done in six phases, beginning on 1 September 1984 - from which date any new release on video has to have a certificate - and finishing on 1 September 1988, by which time the backlog of titles should have been classified."

British Film Institute, Film and Television Yearbook

For fans of the horror film one of the most oppressive aspects of living under a Conservative government over the past eleven years has been the increased tendency towards the obliteration of the individual for the benefit of the state. 'Victorian Values' was a phrase much bandied about in the media during 1989 as a description of the way in which the government wanted to see its role model citizens. However, where we really began to

notice the turn in the tide of personal freedom was in July 1983 when Mr Graham Bright announced his intention to introduce a bill to control the availability of video films, the so-called 'Bright Bill'.

A report was published on 7 March 1984 and received widespread favourable publicity in the media. Among the many labels used to categorise the type of film in question only one was picked up by the public: the term 'Video Nastie' was born.

Now, to the fan of gut-crunching zombie mayhem this put a new perspective on the way we were to see our favourite gore-spilling epics. Basically, this meant that classics (!) such as 'Cannibal Holocaust' and 'Zombie Flesh Eaters' in their uncut form (on video) were now to be classed as obscene under the *Obscene Publications Act of 1959*, and anyone selling such titles is liable to prosecution by the *Director of Public Prosecutions*.

To fully understand the stance the government has taken it is useful to look into the history that led to the

introduction of the Bill.

Manufacturers in the early nineteen-eighties offered the public a choice of three formats whereby they could view their favourite films in the comfort of a warm lounge; these were *Philip's Video-2000*, - which, because of poor marketing and distribution, never took off, *Sony's Betamax* - superior in quality to any other format on the market and *JVC's VHS* (Video Home System). It's only recently that Betamax has given up the ghost to the now English standard VHS.

The effect of all three systems was quite astounding: people could now rent films and watch them in the privacy of their homes: this comparatively new social phenomenon (video recorders date back to the late nineteen fifties) allowed anyone to view uncensored and unclassified films on videotape. This in itself was no problem, in fact the same phenomenon had occurred a few years earlier in the United States and Japan (and indeed was to take place throughout the rest of Europe) and no warning signs of social corruption were flashing. However in

the middle of 1982 reports began appearing in the press linking the viewing of violent video films with violent behaviour, indicating that ultra-violent videos were having a damaging effect upon the lives of young people. Oddly enough, it was at the beginning of this 'media campaign' that Mr Gareth Wardell introduced a Private Members Bill in the Commons on the subject. Although the Bill was withdrawn, Wardell had the opportunity to describe to the House of Commons some of the scenes of 'horrific violence' that was contained in certain types of video film, he appealed for controls in order to protect young children from seeing them.

Wardell's speech, combined with increasing media attention, resulted in the sponsorship of an Enquiry that aimed to research the effects that violent videos were supposedly having on children. The intention of the Enquiry, which was funded by individuals and Churches, was to give guidance to Members of both Houses on a social situation that was giving concern and upon which there appeared to be very little evidence. After studying the evidence, given by the Enquiry, Members could then formulate appropriate legislature if it was seen to be necessary.

At this point it is important to identify exactly what was concerning Members of Parliament and certain areas of the media etc. Up until the introduction of the 'Bright Bill', prosecution (relating to video films) under the Obscene Publication Act of 1959 was difficult. The weakness of the Act was notorious, particularly in relation to its definition of obscenity as 'the tendency to deprave and corrupt' which has been in legislature since 1868 and has formed common law since that time. It was proving difficult to interpret this phrase, both by magistrates but especially by a jury. Specifically, 'Video Nasties' were defined as being a film whose contents "does not refer to pornography, either soft porn or hard porn. It is a category

of feature film that contains scenes of such violence and sadism involving either human beings or animals that they would not be granted a certificate by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) for general release for public exhibition in Britain." However, the label 'Video Nasty' is one that was devised by the popular press as a catchline to tag to their incredible and inventive stories.

The area which concerned campaigners most was the effect that these videos were having on the children who watched them. It is, understandably, impossible to put controls upon who could and could not view the video once it was in the home, and their report discovered that either via parents, or brothers/sisters, many children under sixteen were capable of viewing possibly harmful material. One major report stated that when parents do not watch violent films their children are also much less likely to do so (NSPCC Survey, January 1984). This understandable opinion is contrasted by the vulgar generalisations that came out of a Paediatricians' Survey, where one Doctor concluded his findings with the statement,

"...it is the chaotic families about which we already have grave concerns who are heavy users of videos of all types; such families are unlikely to protect their young children from viewing unsuitable material."
The report added to this,
"It may well be that families who enjoy watching violent videos are likely to be violent themselves."

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's Survey in respect of violent videos had calculated their results from questionnaires issued to parents and their children. 765 parents' questionnaires and 722 children's questionnaires were completed. Following is a sample of their results:





Percentage of parents and children who have seen each of the following films on the DPP's list

Film Title on the DPP's list	% Parents	% Children
Beast in Heat	1.7	1.2
The Bogeyman	11.6	10.2
Cannibal Holocaust	8.0	3.7
Driller Killer	9.0	6.2
Faces of Death	1.7	1.7
The House on the Edge of the Park	2.4	2.9
I Spit on Your Grave	18.2	7.3
The Living Dead...Manchester Morgue	23.0	12.6
Night of the Demon	7.1	6.7
Snuff	3.9	2.8
SS Experiment Camp	6.0	2.9
Zombie Flesh eaters	23.4	15.9

The argument for the harm that viewing such videos might have on the child - especially on their emotional state - was that violence on television (the medium by which these films were viewed) arouses young children emotionally, but the strength of the arousal decreases with repeated displays of violence. Desensitisation is harmful when it actually increases the likelihood of aggressive behaviour by reducing the restraints one naturally imposes on aggressive impulses.

Alternatively, social scientists have long resigned themselves to the fact that the connection between watching violence and subsequently committing violence is tenuous, regardless of statistics and surveys. In basis, everything boils down to the social background, upbringing and mental stability of the individual. Generalisms are unacceptable. When the *Video Recordings Bill* was given its second reading in the Commons in 1984, very few MPs expected it to survive a session. When the crucial votes were taken on 13 March and 6 July 1984 not one single MP voted against it.

The rest is controversial history. On the wave of media publicity the Police seized suspect videos wherever they could, often at the expense of justice

when many 'clean' titles were impounded.

Paradoxically, many of the films on the Director of Public Prosecutions List of obscene videos have, at some stage been granted a certificate for public viewing (at age 18 or over), and yet the same film is cut for its video release. This is despite the existence of a national classification for videos - rated in similar terms with films for general release at cinemas. Anomalies abound.

However in recent years the British Board of Film Classification seems to have relaxed a little with their scissors, possibly because the media is now not so quick to blame videos as the cause of violence in our society. Indeed, the BBFC does seek to, "reflect contemporary attitudes." Surprisingly (perhaps fortunately) there are no written rules, and films are considered partly on the examiner's personal judgement, keeping in mind whether the film is liable to break the law or corrupt or deprave a significant proportion of its audience. Perhaps better times are ahead? However, we are not near the end of the rainbow by any means. For gorchounds (and other interested parties) this has meant that if you wish to view these unclassified films - and if your pals in Holland and the States can, why can't you? - you

have to go underground to secure tapes. In essence this means you write letters in response to adverts everywhere, from the genre's own 'Santitas' to London's 'Loot', in the hope of getting that elusive title. Indeed, those offering illegal copies for sale have come dangerously out of the closet in regards of being visible in the public eye. A wander through London's Camden Market on a Sunday morning will throw up more than the expected number of hard-to-find titles. Because this 'under-the-counter' existence has been around for nearly ten years there is quite a network building the UK and Eire. Any title can be had in exchange for hard cash or, more preferable, another rare title. Newcomers to the scene may well find the whole situation extremely costly to begin with, but as your collection grows so does your bargaining power. And over the years as the quality of VCRs has increased so has the quality of tapes - don't believe that every illegal recording is a black and white snowstorm. Except in the very rarest of instances will you find yourself with a poor quality copy of a film as collectors are continually up-grading their titles. In any case, most lists usually grade their titles from mint, first generation copies, downwards.

What all this brings me around to is the benefits that the 1984 'Video Recording Act' has brought about. *Benefits?*

Well, consider this: If the Bill hadn't been introduced, many titles, now unavailable for sale or rent in this country. However there is no way the number of titles on offer would outnumber the amount that are available to us as 'underground enthusiasts'. The more notorious titles would certainly find a market, but can you imagine anyone wanting to distribute *Jean Rollin's* films (even in France he is disliked!), or the less perverse stuff by *Jess Franco*? And then consider all the Japanese/Chinese films that are currently gaining

popularity in fan circles. Channel Four's 'Chinese Ghost Stories' season of movies screened over Christmas is just the acceptable tip of the iceberg. The market would not be able to cope with such a diverse variety of material. If, like many buffs, you have a list tucked into a drawer somewhere that details the videos another collector is offering for sale, see how many obscure and rare titles there are. There are, unquestionably, hundreds that we can obtain that would not be considered for release in this country because it wouldn't prove to be profitable enough for the distributors. And how else could you obtain a copy of Argento's 'Opera', two months before its limited release in this country.

What about all those sleaze titles from the rest of Europe?

Those elusive titles, such as 'Sexandriods'?

So, you may not get the original video box cover for a title like 'Henry...' (although you can always get excellent xeroxes) but you do get to pay a reasonable price - often less than ten pounds. And the more fanatical get to travel - to meet other fans, exchange tapes, drink - even plan trips to Holland to acquire originals!

Mostly there is the state of existing as a part of fandom. You know you are not alone in your quest for blood and guts of the ripest kind.

As long as this exists, you can be guaranteed the bloody best of what the genre has to offer.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Although your views on censorship and on those films that have been refused certification by the British Board of Film Censors are welcome, we cannot entertain correspondence regarding the sale or exchange of 'video nasties'. Sorry.



Dario Argento Interviewed

Conducted by Mario Pinelli



Mario Pinelli met up with Dario Argento after a recent appearance at London's *Scala Cinema* and managed to get a few moments of conversation with Italy's most respected giallo director.

MK: Could you tell us about the reason for your visit to London?

DA: (laughs) I'm here for a special screening of three of my films at the *Scala Cinema*. This is to coincide with the release of a book about my work, by Maitland McDonagh, the book is called *Broken Minds, Broken Mirrors*.

MK: Did you contribute to the book?

DA: Very much. Maitland asked for my opinions and I helped her as much as I could. She is a very knowledgeable and enthusiastic person and I think that the book shows this. I was a bit surprised at first - that someone wanted to write a whole book about me. It's a very great honour, even more so because the *Scala* has gone to so much effort to help launch the book.

MK: They're showing *Opera* uncut aren't they?

DA: Yes. I believe they have a special license that allows them to show films in their uncut form. I'm not sure which version they're showing though. There are so many!

MK: Does it bother you that *Opera*, as with many of your films, has had so much trouble with the censors?

DA: It used to, but now I have to accept it. When I make a film I don't think about censorship, that wouldn't be fair to the audience. In Italy my films are uncensored on video but censored at the theatre - I believe that is the opposite of Great Britain. It would be nice if everyone who went to see my films actually saw them the way I made them, but there are a lot of social and cultural barriers to be broken before that happens. In some countries my films are banned completely!

Many film directors from my country are now making films for a world market - that is to say for an English speaking audience. We know we can be more successful abroad than at home and so we accept that different countries have different views on what people should see in the theatre. Although I have learnt to accept that censorship exists, I am totally against it.

MK: You've shot your recent films with English dialogue, presumably to make them more accessible. Is it a problem filming in a language that you are not familiar with?

DA: I actually shoot in Italian, and English speaking actors are filmed in their native tongue, they are then

dubbed over for an Italian audience. Likewise, the Italian actors are then dubbed into English for the English speaking audience. It can be very confusing but my own English is improving and I have the assistance of an excellent translator who is always present on the set. The music is recorded separately and mixed as a separate track, this helps to blend everything together.

MK: One criticism of *Opera* is the dubbing, which is very 'Americanised'?

DA: I have been told this. It is difficult for me, being Italian, to fully realise that problem. I, personally, would be more in favour of shooting the film in Italian and then having it sub-titled for a foreign audience. This is becoming increasingly acceptable but the Americans prefer their films to be dubbed into their 'own' language (laughs). Unfortunately, America is the largest market for my films and I have been advised that it would be best to let them continue doing this. I believe that the British prints of *Opera* are taken from American masters and the American distributors simply didn't do a very good job in arranging the soundtrack, including the dialogue. This is a problem with the type of films I make and the audience that sees them. If I were to make a film like 'Cinema Paradiso' (an Italian film), the



critics would be outraged if the dialogue was dubbed - the distributor would be forced to use subtitles. I don't think a film with sub-titles is any less effective in terms of what the audience experiences, my only concern would be to make sure that the lettering didn't interfere with the picture, with what's happening on the screen.

MK: Your films aren't very 'talky' anyway, would you agree they rely more on visual impact?

DA: Film is a medium that combines both sight and sound, but I would agree that I tend to prefer visualising some things that could be explained by an actor's dialogue. It's also more fun for the audience to do the discovering themselves by using their eyes as opposed to hearing everything second hand. This doesn't mean I don't like dialogue, or I prefer one over the other, it depends on what the script calls for. I put a lot of work into the soundtrack as well, for me the film doesn't finish just inside the camera.

MK: Is there much preparation before a scene is filmed to make sure the camera is where you want it to be when you're filming?

DA: Lots! I must have everything planned out beforehand to the last detail. I sketch the whole film out in a

series of story-boards and then work from there. Because I use a lot of expensive special equipment to film certain scenes I have to justify that expense to the financiers - it makes sense to plan everything beforehand. It does for any director, not just for me.

MK: The impression one gets from viewing your films is that you are very technically minded?

DA: Perhaps I am. I like new technology and I try to break out of the habit of just using the same cameras and lenses as everyone else. There are a lot of cameras designed purely for scientific use that have yet to be used in making motion pictures, but they are inevitably difficult to work with.

MK: Do you have any particular examples?

DA: When I was shooting *Four Flies On Grey Velvet* I used a camera that ran at an incredibly fast speed, it used fifty metres of film in three seconds! The scene we were shooting was near the end with the car crash and we only had two cars. The first shoot went fine until we opened up the back of the camera - all the film had been chewed up and was completely unusable! Nobody was really sure why this had happened, in fact nobody was sure how to use the camera! Previously the

camera had only been loaded with black and white stock but we couldn't see what the difference would be. Eventually one of the technicians realised that colour stock is wound more tightly on the reel than black and white, so we trimmed five feet off the roll and it ran okay.

MK: I read in an interview with Luigi Cozzi that during the filming of that particular scene you were becoming increasingly manic. Was that a fair comment that he made?

DA: He means I was difficult. That is true, I could create all kinds of excuses but to be honest I like working in an atmosphere where there is a certain amount of tension, even if it means I have to create it. After a film has been made I'm the nicest person you can meet, I'm nice to the actors, to the technicians...

MK: Does this go back to you being a 'technical' director, that you possibly prefer to be around the equipment than the people?

DA: Possibly. I don't particularly like actors, with a few exceptions, one has to position them and dress them. There are very few that know what I want. I tend to leave them alone except when we are shooting more complex scenes that involve difficult camera set ups.

MK: This goes against the Hollywood idea that an actor can make or break the picture?

DA: Yes, but it makes sense that the film as a whole is more important than the actors or actresses. My films are more about movement, colour, suspense and violence than about people in 'people situations'.

MK: You are often compared to Hitchcock inasmuch as you are a visual director...

DA: That is a compliment, but not a

You'll have to read Maitland's book, she also discusses this idea.

MK: But you do have a concern with the human eye?

DA: With all eyes. Eyes are not only the windows to the soul they also define the world around us - in a way they are a two-way mirror. I can think of nothing worse than to be blinded and lose the ability to see. If one is born blind then you can adapt and increase your other senses, but to lose one's sight, to have it taken away is a terrible thing. And yet, considering how valuable this sense is to us all we do not protect ourselves enough. The eye is such a sensitive and fragile thing, it can be easily pierced or broken. And because I like to present my films from a point of view, human or animal, you witness events through the eye, whether it be a bird, an insect or a person. The camera is also an eye - it sees for the audience and director alike.

MK: But your elaborate camera-work would make it impossible for the eye to go through such motions...

DA: Not at all! Many times I justify the movement by expressing the point of view of an animal or a bird, they can present a different, more exciting view of what is happening.

MK: Do you have any projects lined up for the near future?

DA: I finished producing Michael Soavi's *The Sect* a short while ago and that has been well received. It should be released in this country sometime in August, but I'm not sure about the exact date. I am working on one of my own pictures but I don't like to discuss anything publicly until everything has been finalised. I always have a number of scripts that are ready for production, but it depends on the finance and getting the right technicians.

MK: Will we be seeing the final of the 'Three Mothers' trilogy?

DA: It won't be my next film, although I am working on the script. In fact I have been working on the script

for the last ten years! (laughs). In truth I would prefer to work from a new script than complete the 'Mothers' trilogy. In a sense there isn't any real motivation for a third film on my behalf, I made the mistake of commenting that two of the films were part of a possible trilogy. It is still a possibility, though it seems increasingly unlikely.

MK: Thank you very much for your time and patience.

DA: Thank you for being so interested in my work!



true comparison. Hitchcock, whom I admire very much, used to montage his scenes from separate takes whereby I like to be continuous and avoid cut-away shots. Perhaps we have a similar eye for certain details but it goes no further than that. Brian DePalma is more akin to Hitchcock in a visual sense than I am.

MK: Looking at your films there are certain elements or images that distinguish them as belonging to an Argento film, such as your interest in sharp implements and eyes?

DA: Is that a comment or a question? (laughs)

MK: Well I was...

DA: Yes, I know what you mean.



Metamorph is a fanzine dedicated to *Doctor Who*, the longest running SF series in the world

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Selling 'SCANNERS' by Andrej Karczewski



Few Directors ever attain 'commercial' success with their first feature. Success - and by that I mean the ability to raise money on your next feature based on the results of the last one - doesn't come easily. Indeed most directors start off on low budget features and they gradually build on this until the budget for their films hit the \$3 million plus mark. John Carpenter progressed from *Dark Star*, to *Assault on Precinct 13* onto *Halloween*. David Cronenberg is another case in point, his spending power grew in line with the popularity with each successive film he lensed, cumulating with *The Fly*, via the commercial failure of *Videodrome* and the borderline success of *Dead Ringers*.

Cronenberg's success is due to the quality of his work. He has, with the exception of *Fast Company*, made innovative and compelling films that unite commercial necessities with personal vision. To a large extent, Cronenberg really came to the public eye with *Scanners* in 1981, his most profitable film to that date. *Scanners'* success was partly due to the larger budget afforded him by the results of

his previous features and partly due to the intense advertising campaign launched by *Avco Embassy* in the States; a campaign that was taken up with equal enthusiasm by *New Realm Distributors* in the UK.

Theatre owners were given a whole host of ideas and gimmicks to promote the movie in their local areas in the 'Advertising and Promotion Guide' for *Scanners*. Aimed, one hopes, at the American market, the exploitation elements in the promotion are quite amazing. There were ten basic outlines that the more enthusiastic cinema owner could opt to go for; these were in addition to the various press advertising blocks, and advertising accessories that I shall cover later on.

Placing an 'attention grabbing ad' in the classifieds section of the local paper was the simplest way of bringing *Scanners* to the public eye. One ad could run like this:

"Do you have unusual psychic gifts? People with extra-sensory perception and other unusual

mental abilities wanted for intriguing experiments. You may be a SCANNER. For further details, call

Anyone phoning could be given free tickets for a special showing of the film or promotion merchandise if they agreed to participate in demonstrations in the cinema lobby. As well as attracting the attention of the public it was hoped that members of the press would be curious as to what these experiments were all about, they could also be invited to the theatre events for extra coverage. All this was in order to "spread interest in scanning-power throughout (the) community."

Knowing that *Scanners* has two spectacular scenes (the mind-blowing explosion in the opening moments and the final contest between Valc and Revok at the film's conclusion) *New Realm* suggested an easy cost effective theatre promotion. Based on the red light and buzzer used on sound stages to signal the shooting of a scene, they



David Cronenberg's
SCANNERS
 IS MIND BLOWING



In a final key scene in **SCANNERS**, an "New Realism" science fiction thriller opening... at the short Theatre a phone booth... circuitized from a room... computerized control... melts and blows up... nearby car and gasoline station... to catch fire and explode across a half mile of countryside... Credit for this and the other stunning "special effects" in **SCANNERS** goes to Gary Zeller, whose wizardry has created effects for many films, including "Dawn of the Dead" and "The War...". For **SCANNERS**, we tried to create audience tension but always within the confines of "plausibility," explains Zeller with many of the... and devices to... Apocals ppe Now

suggested the construction of a light box (similar to those used on cinema Exit signs) with a red light bulb inside. Stencilled letters could then be cut away to make a sign that reads "NO ADMISSION - SCANNING IN PROGRESS"

The idea was to turn the sign on, along with a buzzer that could not be heard inside the theatre, when the above two scenes are being screened. They go on to suggest that "No one will be permitted to enter or leave the theatre until these scanning signals are turned off". A similar idea was used during the initial promotion of *Hitchcock's 'Psycho'*, not allowing anyone in after the first fifteen minutes and asking the audience not to give away the film's twist ending.

One of the most popular, and successful, ways of promoting a movie is to have "sneak previews" in selected areas followed a regular run of the movie itself. When would be the best time to preview *Scanners*? The distributors suggest, "At the witching hour... Midnight... when thoughts of youthful moviegoers turn to terror. Except that in this case, it isn't a Midnight Screening. It's a Midnight Scanning." With this in mind, the cinema manager

could possibly stage the preview as a tie-in with a the youth market radio station. In conjunction with a radio promotion the participating DJs could invite the audience to see *Scanners* telepathically! Not as crazy as it may seem: firstly the DJ announces the screening (done straight) and then he should ask his listeners to scan his thoughts, "If you can scan my thoughts, you know where I'll be Friday night at midnight. Call now...tell me what I'm talking about...and you'll be there too." The first ten, twenty-five or fifty callers who identify the Midnight Scanning receive free tickets. Pretty easy, huh? After this the DJ should plug *Scanners* as "the most mind-blowing terror tale ever filmed".

By now I'm sure you can understand the aims of this inventive exploitation. As the distributors themselves say, "The idea is to generate maximum airplay (on radio) - then make the SCANNING a highly publicised event - all in the entertaining spirit of *SCANNERS*."

The promotion ideas keep rolling on - at one point the guide even suggests that if your own (ie cinema manager) ESP is powerful enough, you already

know what the next promotion is and don't need to read any further! Other stunts include inviting a real psychic into the theatre to make a guest appearance, recording a voice slowing through a phrase shifter and playing the tape in the theatre foyer, thereby re-creating the unique 'scanning' sound. Another suggests inviting fine art students to apply their talents to a movie campaign by creating a 'Psychic Gallery' of sculptures in the cinema foyer, in the style of the scanner who uses his ability to create huge bizarre sculptures in the film itself. Yet another involves utilising the equipment, and help, of a local university psychology department who can create experiments involving biofeedback machines which measure alpha waves - "urge moviegoers to see the film then act as 'volunteers' in the experiments!"

Another popular promotion gimmick is to give away the movie tie-in novelisation in a variety of competitions (this was in 1981, before video promotion really took off). Cinema Managers are asked to join forces with local booksellers for a major tie-in, creating eye-catching displays such as: * displaying a mannequin's head (with



David Cronenberg's
SCANNERS
IS M



David Cronenberg's
SCANNERS
IS MIND BLOWING



David Cronenberg's
SCANNERS
IS MIND BLOWING

Zeller is well aware of the dangers that come with creating fires and explosions for a living. He wears special clothes and is constantly followed by an assistant with a fire extinguisher.

"I don't even allow a walkie-talkie around in case it might emit a signal," he adds.

Each of the spectacular scenes Zeller created for "SCANNERS" had to be perfect the first time because of the tremendous costs and time required. For the final explosion rigging the car, and two weeks to

Zeller and his wife own their own company, The Plastics Factory, creating stunts, special weapons, electronic gadgetry and customized vehicles for their clients. They've been in business for 15 years and hold — between them — nine pyrotechnical and weapons licenses.



tiny lights in the eyes) in the window, surrounded by stacks of the paperback, backed with Scanners posters and photos.

* include one of the sculptures from the 'Psychic Gallery' in the window display
And, of course, all the displays should have a sign that reads, 'Scan the Book, then see SCANNERS'.

Much of the promotion is tailored around getting psychologists, psychics and parapsychologists involved in foyer demonstrations, all of which should be well publicised in advance.

If cinema managers took up some of these ideas and put them into practice it would certainly have made going to see the movie great fun. Unfortunately, in Britain, I suspect the 'British Reserve' would have hindered any attempts at successfully promoting the film to the fullest. Nevertheless, New Realm (the British Distributor) did plan a massive campaign in London, flyposting three types of dayglo poster around the West End as well as handing out hundreds of small 4" x 4" stickers that warned...

"MIND YOUR HEAD - the SCANNERS are about".

A full range of press advertising was also available in a variety of sizes, each showing the British poster image of Revok coupled with various captions, ranging from 2cms x 1 column to 9cms x 2 columns in size. The press had access to the usual press pack (storyline, biographical notes production notes and front of house stills in black and white), and of course there was the quad poster and the dayglo posters. There was also an interesting number of trailers and commercials: four different thirty second radio commercials and tv adverts in 30, 15, 10 and, surprisingly, five second versions. Cinema managers could also rent the full X certificate trailer as well as X and U certificate teasers for the film.

All in all it seems not much had been missed, theatre managers were supplied with all the goods to exploit the film to the fullest. The proof of the success of the promotion of the film lays in the results and, unquestionably, Scanners did do well at the box office being well received by fans and critics alike. However, with all this insight into how the film could be exploited I still believe you have to have a good

movie in the first place. There is a thresh-hold to how many people you can sucker into seeing a bad film. You can, as the saying goes, fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time. Strangely enough, the point of all this obvious gimmickry is lost if the potential audience is aware that they are being manipulated by the film's promoters. People don't like being told what is or is not a good film, they like to find out for themselves. The promotion of Scanners gives us the opportunity to do this: its approach is sometimes extreme, but like the film itself, it is certainly entertaining.



10 SECONDS
The Pain Begins.

15 SECONDS
You Can't Breathe.

20 SECONDS
You Explode.

Japanese Giants!

An Eastern Mega-Monsterthon compiled by Peter Gunner



In the following filmography we've tried to list as many Japanese monster movies as we could find, dating from 1929 all the way up to 1985. The 'monster' cycle ground to a halt in 1975, although there was an ill-fated attempt at reviving their 'best seller' with *Godzilla - The Legend is Reborn* in 1985. The listing couldn't possibly be complete, but it does provide a good insight into the more obscure Japanese exports that flooded the world market after the success of *Godzilla* in 1954. It also provides a full filmography of special effects expert *Eiji Tsuburaya* and director *Inoshiro Honda*.

Eiji Tsuburaya was born in Japan in 1901 and entered the film industry with the *Nippon-Tennessyoku-Katsudo Studios* in Kyoto as an assistant cameraman in 1919. He started at *Toho Studios* after working at various other studios specialising in effects and it was there that he set up their first special effects department. He left Toho in 1945 to concentrate on developing his work and re-joined again five years later. In 1954 he helped create the special effects for Japan's most successful monster

movie - *Godzilla*. He continued to work on a variety of Toho monster films right up until his death in 1970. It was Tsuburaya's craftsmanship that set the standards for many of the films that were to follow the original *Godzilla*, and undoubtedly he is largely responsible for Toho's international success from the late 1950s right through to the early 1970s.

Along with *Eiji Tsuburaya*, *Inoshiro Honda* can be credited as one of the best directors working in this particular Japanese genre. Born in Japan in 1911, Honda first trained as a painter before entering the film industry. His debut movie was *Godzilla* in 1954 and, like Tsuburaya, he was also largely associated with Toho Studios throughout his career. His films take themselves seriously, unlike much of the later material coming out of Japan, and are noted for their excellent use of special effects (the only films he made without Tsuburaya were *Yog - Monster From Space* (67), *Godzilla Versus the Smog Monster* (1971) and *The Terror of Godzilla* (75) - the last two both made after Tsuburaya's death). Although lacking any substantial character development, his

films boast a fast narrative drive and his work is often considered the best of Toho's many productions.

One other director of note is *Jun Fukuda* who made his debut with horror/thriller *The Secret of the Telegians* (60). He is more noted for his later *Godzilla* films: *Ebirah, Terror of the Deep* (66) and *Son of Godzilla* (67), both of which combine a high degree of drama with comedy. Unfortunately his last three *Godzilla* outings (*Godzilla on Monster Island* (71), *Godzilla Versus Megalon* (73), *Godzilla Versus the Cosmic Monster* (74)) are considered by fans of the genre to be the worst of the whole cycle. As well as lacking the technical expertise of Tsuburaya, the plots are simple and determinedly aimed at a child audience. To his credit, Fukuda's films boast an excellent use of colour and are often quite surreal because of this.

It would be impossible to review all the films (even briefly) but there are a number, apart from the ones familiar to fans, that are worth mentioning in more detail.

The H-Man (58) is a superior Japanese version of *The Blob*, and contains some alarming dissolving sequences (by Tsuburaya). The creature (a group organism) is the result of a boat of fishermen coming into contact with a radioactive cloud. Unlike other Toho movies, this monster doesn't reduce Japan to rubble, it slides under doors and through drains in order to dissolve anyone it can come into contact with. A very tightly paced horror movie with some surprising shocks. The premise was re-interpreted two years later in *The Human Vapour* by the same director/effects team.

In 1963 Inoshira/Tsuburaya made *Matango - The Fungus of Terror*, another excellent monster/chiller. A group of tourists come across an uncharted island and come into contact with a strange fungus that grows on the skin, turning the recipient into a walking fungus creature. Not as silly as it is often considered, *Matango* boasts some excellent make-up and atmospheric scenery. Because the action is confined to a fog-shrouded tropical island (and not allowed to run riot through Japan/the world) the dramatic elements are heightened, making this a concise little shocker that is well worth searching out.

Another oddity to spring out of the popularity of Japan's strange monster genre was *Gamera*, the flying turtle. Eager to break into the monopoly of monster movies, Toho's rival studios, *Daii*, created their own *Godzilla* and featured him in no less than six features. *Gamera* first appeared in 1966 in *Gamera The Invincible*, supported by genre veterans *Brian Donlevy* and *Albert Dekker* (in an attempt to Americanise their films). After this first venture, the flying turtle went the way of all the big monsters and featured in monster Vs monster movies - *Gamera Vs Barugon* (66), *Gamera Vs Gyaos* (67), *Gamera Vs Viras* (68), *Gamera Vs Guiron* (69) and *Gamera Vs Jiger* (70), all in quick succession. With the exception of the second film (which had the unusually long running time of 101 minutes), all the features were directed



by *Noriaki Yuasa*. The films feature a host of monsters but none of them showed the ingenuity or originality of the early Toho creations, at worst the costumes were quite obviously just that - costumes, at best they looked very surreal to Western viewers, but nothing more.

At the same time of *Gamera*, *Daii* studios created the remarkable *Majin*, a giant stone statue who comes to life to battle evil. *Majin* starred in three features, all of which were turned out in rapid succession; he briefly appeared

on American screens in 1966 before being thrown into the void of State-side television-land.

In 1969 *Pacemaker Studios* released the amazing *Goke - Body Snatcher from Hell*. This fearsome creature feeds on the few survivors of an (effective) air crash and enters their bodies, re-animating the victims vampire-style. This particular production, directed by Hajime Saso, has some very nasty moments and the blood content alone makes this a rarity with comparison to Japan's 'big-monster' exports.

Filmography

English titles will be more familiar to enthusiasts so we've placed these first, followed American and then finally Japanese titles (where alternatives exist). We deliberately haven't published running times because they vary considerably between (longer) Japanese versions and American releases, which were often re-edited and original American footage inserted. Without exception, all the British releases are the American versions with only a possible change in the title.

Carnival of Blood (GB) /
Chimatsuri (Japan) 1929 (spfx /
Tsuburaya)

Tales of Monsters (GB) / Yoma

Kidan (Japan) 1929 (spfx /
Tsuburaya)

Kwaidan Yanagi Zoshi (Japan)
1932 (spfx / Tsuburaya)

M k u l t r a

Godzilla (GB) / Godzilla, King of the Monsters (US) / Gojira (Japan) 1954 (co. special effects : Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Half Human (US) / Jujin Yukiotoko 1955 (special effects : Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Giantis, the Fire Monster (GB/US) / Gojira No Gyakushyu / Godzilla No Gyakushyu (Japan) 1955 (co. special effects : Tsuburaya)

Rodon (GB/US) / Radon (Japan) 1956 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Mysterious Satellite (GB) / Warning from Space (US) / Uchujin Tokyo Arawaru (Japan) 1956

The White Serpent (US/GB) / Byakufujin No Yoren (Japan) 1956 (spfx / Tsuburaya)

The Mysterians (GB/US) / Chikyū Boeigun 1957 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Adventures of Sun Wu Kung (GB/US) / Songoku 1958 (spfx / Tsuburaya)

The H-Man (GB/US) / Bijyo To Ekitai Ningen (Japan) 1958 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Varan The Unbelievable (GB/US) / Daikaiju Baran (Japan) 1958 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Battle in Outer Space (GB/US) / Uchu Dai Sensō (Japan) 1959 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

The Secret of the Telegian (GB/US) / Denso Ningen (Japan) 1960 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Jun Fukuda

The Human Vapour (GB/US) / Gasu Ningen Dai Ichi-Go (Japan) 1960 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

The Last War (US) / Sekai Dai Sensō (Japan) 1961 (spfx / Tsuburaya)

Mothra (GB/US) / Mosura (Japan) 1961 (co. special effects : Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Gorath (US) / Yosei Gorasu (Japan) 1962 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

King Kong Versus Godzilla (GB/US) / Kingu Kongu Tai Gojira (Japan) 1962 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Matango - Fungus of Terror (GB) / Attack of the Mushroom People (US) / Matango (Japan) 196 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Dir. Inoshiro Honda and Eiji Tsuburaya

The Lost World of Sinbad (GB) / Samurai Pirate (US) / Daitozuku (Japan) 1963 (spfx / Tsuburaya)

Atragon/Atragon the Flying Sub (US) / Kaeti Gunkan (Japan) 1963 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Mothra Versus Godzilla/Godzilla Versus the Thing (GB/US) / Mosura Tai Gojira/Gojira Tai Mosura (Japan) 1964 (co. special effects : Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Dagora, the Space Monster (US) / Uchu Daikaiju Dogora (Japan) 1964 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Ghidrah, the Three-Headed Monster (US) / Ghidorah, Sandai Kaiju Chikyū No Kessen (Japan) 1964 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Frankenstein Conquers the World (GB/US) / Furanfeustein Tai Baragon (Japan) 1965 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Daiboken (Japan) 1965 (spfx / Tsuburaya)

Gamera the Invincible (US) / Daikiju Gamera (Japan) 1965

Monster Zero/Invasion of the Astro Monsters/Battle of the Astros/Invasion of the Astros (GB/US) / Kaiju Daisenō (Japan) 1965 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

War of the Gargantuas (US) / Sanda Tai Gaira/Furankenstein No Kaiju-Sanda Tai Gaira (Japan) 1966 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Ebirah, Terror of the Deep (GB) / Godzilla Versus the Sea Monster (US) / Nankai No Dai Ketto (Japan) 1966 (spfx / Tsuburaya)
Dir. Jun Fukuda

Terror Beneath the Sea (US) / Kaitei Daisenō (Japan) 1966

War of the Monsters/Gamera

Versus Barugou (US) / Gamera Tai Barugon (Japan) 1966

Majin, Monster of Terror/Majin the Hideous Idol (US) / Daimasin 1966

Majin Strikes Again (US) 1966

The Return of Majin (US) 1966

Gappa the Triphibian Monster (GB) / Mooster from a Prehistoric Planet (US) / Daikyaju Gappa (Japan) 1967

The X From Outer Space (US) / Uchu Daikaiju Guilala (Japan) 1967

King Kong Escapes (GB/US) / Kingu Kongu No Gyakushu (Japan) 1967 (spfx / Tsuburaya) Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Son of Godzilla (GB/US) / Gojira No Musoku (Japan) 1967 (co. special effects : Tsuburaya) Dir. Jon Fukuda

Yog - Monster from Space (US) 1967 Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Gammera Versus Gyaos (US) 1967

Yongary, Monster from the Deep (US) / Dai Koesu Yongkari (South Korea/Japan) 1967

Gammera Versus Viras (US) 1968

Destroy All Planets (US) / Gamera Tai Virus (Japan) 1968

The Green Slime (US/GB) / Sango Uchu Daisakusen (Japan) 1968

Destroy All Monsters (US) / Kaiji Soshingeki (Japan) 1968 (spfx / Tsuburaya) Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Latitude Zero (US) / Ido Zero Daikusen (Japan) 1969 (spfx / Tsuburaya) Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Godzilla's Revenge (US) / Oru Kaiju Daishingeki (Japan) 1969 (spfx / Tsuburaya) Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Attack of the Monsters (US) / Gamera Tai Guiron (Japan) 1969

Goke, the Body Snatcher from Hell/ Body Snatcher from Hell (US) / Kyuketsuki Gokemidoro (Japan) 1969

Gammera Versus Monster X/ Gammera Versus Jiga (US) / Gamera Tai Dainaju Jaigon (Japan) 1970

Godzilla Versus the Smog Monster (GB/US) / Gojira Tai Mosura (Japan) 1971 Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Godzilla on Monster Island (US) / Gojira Tai Gaigao (Japan) 1971 Dir. Jun Fukuda

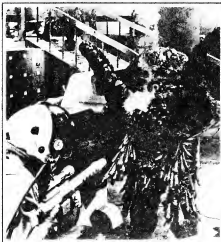
War of the Monsters (GB) / Godzilla Versus Megalon (US) / Gojira Tai Megaro (Japan) 1973 Dir. Jun Fukuda

Godzilla Versus the Cosmic Monster (GB/US) / Godzilla Versus The Bionic Monster (US) / Gojira Tai Meka-Gojira (Japan) 1974 Dir. Jun Fukuda

Last Days of Planet Earth/ Catastrophe 1999: The Prophecies of Nostradamus (US) 1974

The Terror of Godzilla (US) / Meka-Gojira no Gyakusyu (Japan) 1975 Dir. Inoshiro Honda

Godzilla 1985 - The Legend is Reborn (US) 1985



M k u l t r a

Open Up and Bleed

Dear Andrej

It's not often that I feel obliged to write to a fanzine but your editorial on Chas Balon really knocked my nose out of joint. Chas is an enthusiastic fan of horror movies, especially films with guts. His Deep Red magazine knocked the spots off the competition and makes Mkultra look anaemic by comparison. The Deep Red Horror Handbook is essential reading and reference material and I find his writing style a lot more refreshing and down to earth than anything found elsewhere. Perhaps you could take a leaf from his bloody book.
S Carlton
Bethesda, North Wales.

I would completely agree that Chas has a certain wordy charm and that both Deep Red and The Deep Red Horror Handbook make good reading material. The point I made was that in reviewing films Chas often lets his tendency for hyperbole get in the way of the facts. Look up his comments regarding Fulci's Zombie on page 306 of the Deep Red Horror Handbook. Is there really a 14 inch splinter in the eye? I only saw a short piece of splintered wood enter Karlato's orb. And was it in slow motion? It was drawn out, agonisingly so, but not in slow motion. I felt bored by what I said and furthermore someone should tell Chas that he can't draw, the Handbook's cover is dreadful and look at page seven! Poor Dario

Dear Andrej

I've been buying Mkultra since issue one and I can say it's been getting better each issue. The artwork makes a change from seeing the same old photographs over and over again and the articles are absorbing, though I found this issue's bit on 'Godzilla' a little short. I would have expected a more in-depth look at Toho's most famous creature, especially considering the wealth of reference material available. You seem to be leaning more towards horror/gore videos and less towards classic horror/monster/Sci-Fi. I hope this isn't a trend you intend to continue as fewer magazines are devoting space to these old classics. Apart from that small criticism I look forward to the next issue.
Best wishes
Nick Taylor
Rugby, Staffordshire

Thanks for the comments Nick, I would agree that our coverage of the big G didn't do justice to his Fuji-smashing career, I promise

a full overview in a future issue (as well as the Japanese monster movie listing in this issue). Regarding our coverage of classic horror/sci-fi movies - well, we haven't forgotten them, it's just that space is prioritised to new movies. Maybe, as Editor, I'm a little more enthusiastic over the more subversive 'modern' material and this reflects in the magazine, but our next issue should strike a neat balance between the old and new. 'Nuff said

Dear Andrej

After reading your Editorial I had to put pen to paper and say that we're not all silent, just lazy. Up until last year I produced my own fanzine and during the two years I knocked the 'zine out I never received more than a handful of letters, mostly from other editors! You do feel like you're working in a vacuum a lot of the time, as you say, having to rely upon your own biases in material to guide what goes into each issue. But I think this is a good thing as the reputation of a fanzine is the personality of the editor that shows in the pages. All I can add to that is keep up the good work and give Mario Pinelli a gold star for his exhaustive Nightmare Concert review! Yours truly
Jim Ryan
Camden, London

My plea for a response from our readers was an attempt to open up a broader forum for discussion (yes, that old fanzine cliché). It's great that people write in and say how bad or good Mkultra is, but it would be better if writers told us more about themselves and what they like. However, if you don't tell us what you want, how are we going to give it to you? Fanzines are for fans that don't exist to build the ego of their editors. (Jim used to publish the excellent 'Gung Underground' which combined horror and heavy metal!)

Dear Andrej

I'm glad there is another like-minded soul who hates chubby Chas Balon. Too many fanzines are lifting his writing style and the result is nothing short of garbage. Take In The Flesh for example, page after page of gore and blood, and reviews that are both uninformative and often misogynistic. There are only a few magazines around that are worth buying for their thoughtful content and Mkultra is one of them. I had hoped that

the 'gore' crane would die, but it seems to continue. Maybe the people who enjoy these movies prefer blood instead of plot and effects instead of decent actors.

Maybe the success of Silence of the Lambs shows that things are taking a turn for the better.

Yours truly

MJ

Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

'MJ', I'm not sure whether you intended to be obnoxious or not, but that is the impression I get from your hastily written, badly spelt letter. Let me make a few points. Firstly: as I said in reply to S Carlton's letter, I don't dislike Chas, I just find his style of writing too intrusive on the content. I also don't see what his weight has to do with anything. Secondly: I think In The Flesh is an honest, down-to-earth fanzine that adheres to its title as being a magazine "with guts". I'm not going to defend it, that would be for editor Steve C. to do, but I personally enjoy the editorial he offers his readers. If you don't like it, I don't know why you buy it. Equally, Mkultra's geared at ultra-video - film on video that, usually, offend, intrude, amuse and generally thrill their viewer. Mature men movies, such as Silence of the Lambs, therefore don't get high priority in our pages. Incidentally, I also happen to be a big fan of movies with lots of blood and guts - preferably with good actors and decent plots. But I'll take them how they come. If you have a point to make I suggest you clarify what it is you're trying to say, in the meantime why not try out a subscription to Film Review?

Dear Andrej

Thanks for sending your latest ish. I'm glad to see that you've finally gone 'wraparound' and that you're rigidly against going 'slick'. I don't think you could improve the appearance of Mkultra (with the possible exception of printing on a higher quality stock, but I know that would mean a price increase. I'm in favour, is anyone else?). Contents-wise I found Mario Pinelli's lengthy review of Fulci's new film very enjoyable and I recently received a copy and found it to be everything Mario said it was! Your own article 'Four By Franco' was well-researched, fun to read and well illustrated. As a fan of Jess Franco I know his work can vary between great and dreadful, the four films you selected were indicative of his movies, a good choice. The 'Blood Debate' was a little scholarly, do I

Open Up and Bleed

detect the presence of a thesaurus in Andy Waugh's article? He made some interesting points, particularly about how much you can read into a film. From my experience movies are like poetry, as you can read what you like into both. Only time will tell the value of one film over another. But isn't the whole horror movie cult subjective anyway?

I hope the absence of the fanzine page was due to lack of space and not a permanent policy as I tend to shop for most of my reading material from pages such as this (and that of Samhain).

I can say I really feel 'at home' with your editorial, and this makes Mkultra real pleasure to read.

Best of luck with future issues,
Kevin Gordon
Brixton, London

Thanks for the comments Kev, I'm sorry to say that Andy Waugh actually talks like he writes, but shouldn't every aspiring writer have a thesaurus to hand? I don't have any plans to print on a better quality stock, the current paper weight is ample (bring not too light, nor too heavy) You hit the nail on the head regarding the fanzine page - the dreaded lack of space and short supply of fanzines to review (Editors take note: you get a free copy of Mkultra in exchange for your 'zine, as well as a free plug)

Dear Andrej

Thanks for the latest issue of Mkultra, I'm sorry I was late in paying for it! This issue made good reading (and viewing). I was particularly intrigued by Fulci's *Nightmare Concert* and I've read in another magazine about a film he shot around the same time called *Demonia*. Any chance of some similar coverage on this one? The *Godzilla* article was well-illustrated and the screen-shots were very effective although it would be better to reproduce stills when you can as the quality is that much better. Two films that were missing from the filmography were (I think) *War of the Monsters* and *Godzilla Vs the Bionic Monster*, two of my favourites.

The highlight of the issue was your review of the Jess Franco films although I would have preferred to see a Franco filmography as well, or even more space devoted to his often neglected work. How about it? Well, that's all, oh, you'll find enclosed a cheque for the next issue!

Regards
Andy Huxton, Northampton

Demonia, made a year previous to *Nightmare Concert*, is a real banger to track down, but Enzo-gorehound Pinelli says he's picked up the scent of this particular obscurity - see our next issue if all goes well.

The *Godzilla* filmography was at complete as possible. *Godzilla Vs the Bionic Monster* is listed under its British release title of *Godzilla Vs The Cosmic Monster* - we've actually updated the *Godzilla* filmography (with Japanese titles) and added them to our listing in this issue.

I agree that screen-shots aren't ideal, but they are better than repeating photographs that most readers will be familiar with. I hope to make use of frame flow-ups for certain articles and this will produce better quality results, but I'm still sticking to screen-shots where I have no other choice.

Well Andy, you're not alone in liking Franco's work and we'll make sure there'll be more quite soon. As for a Franco filmography, I'm not sure if even Jess knows how many films he's made but I'll try my best - can anyone out there help with the ultimate Jess Franco film listing?

Dear Andrej

For the last few years I've been very lazy. I've enjoyed Samhain, Psychotronic and other semi-go fanzines, but I've never bothered with Mkultra. I read a few reviews and saw the adverts but never took time to order a copy. Well I finally got off my ass and ordered issue four. Now I feel like an idiot! If this issue is anything to go by, I've got some serious searching to do to get the first four issues!

The articles and illustrations were first class but I particularly enjoyed Manno Pinelli's article and accompanying photographs regarding Fulci's *Nightmare Concert*. The Franco article made interesting reading, even though I've never enjoyed his films (with the exception of the two *Fu Manchu* movies which were more in the style of the Rohmer novels).

I'm glad to see that Mkultra doesn't take on the two current trends in film 'criticism': the 'coffee-table' approach that glibly glosses over everything and the 'splatter' method which necessitates the use of 'fuck', 'pumping red stuff' and 'chow-down' in every review. I like a lot of the so-called video nasties, two of my favourite films are *Cannibal Holocaust* and *The Beyond*, but I feel they deserve more

astute attention than they have been given in the past. With this sort of superficial attention how can we convince the censorship brigade that we are not a group of depraved, sick individuals who jerk off at the very material they want to stop us seeing? Did you see where Kim Newman's *Nightmare Movies* was polled in the recent Samhain awards? If this is indicative of horror movie fandom then we are in a mess!

I wish you continued success, and hopefully my ignorance has ended!

James Taylor
(address not supplied)

*Thanks for your letter Jim. Mario's Fulci review has proved very popular, not one letter of complaint! As for your comments regarding our critical faculties, I don't make a conscious decision select either 'high-brow' or 'low-brow' (have I just made this phrase up?) writers. Each contribution is selected according to its factual content and style. You have to acknowledge that the appeal of gore movies ranges from early teens to mature adults (whatever age that may be) and that very often the writer's style is geared towards prose that reflects the nature of these movies. Equally, critiques on Hitchcock tend to be as severe and analytical as the films themselves. It's very difficult to approach a film such as *Cannibal Holocaust* with the critical tools that you might use when writing on other genre films. It is a very simplistic film that is extremely superficial, the thin plot is just a poor excuse to stage a variety of brutal, shocking scenes. Towards this goal it succeeds where others have failed and if we are to acknowledge its effects on the genre we are going to have to create a new set of critical guide-lines. Ten years on I think that we are still defining that criteria.*

*I was, like you, also more than surprised to see Newman's excellent tome rated as the third worst book of the year in the Samhain Awards! I could put this down to the juvenile mentality of Sam's readers - but this isn't the case. The excellent Exorcist 3 scooped a high number of votes which proves that Sam's readers have their all their critical faculties intact. Interestingly the poll did seem to confirm my own choice of best/worst of the year - certainly the placing in the fanzine section was well deserved. Perhaps the placing of *Nightmare Movies* was just a slight aberration in an otherwise excellent round-up.*

Dracula Has Risen from the Grave and Plague of the Zombies images: David Joyce

Four By Warhol

Derek Henderson

"I made my earliest films using, for several hours, just one actor on the screen doing the same thing: eating or sleeping or smoking. I did this because people usually just go to the movies to see only the star, to eat him up, so here at last is a chance to look only at the star for as long as you like, no matter what he does and to eat him up all you want to. It was also easier to make."

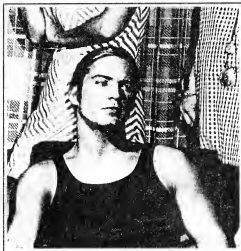
Andy Warhol

When Andy Warhol died suddenly in 1987, after a routine gall-bladder operation, he was fifty-eight years old and had not made a film for eleven years. Since his death much attention has been drawn to his work in a number of international retrospectives which have focused, in the main, upon Warhol's oeuvre with specific reference to the two dimensional static images found in his paintings, drawings and prints. Yet, between 1963 and 1967 he produced (in the functional sense) a vast amount of work on film, little of which was shown at the time and most of which still remains unshown to this day.

The reasons behind this lack of distribution may be founded as far back as the early 1970's when the *Factory* (Warhol's art-making studio) withdrew his films from distribution. In Britain only a handful of the films are legally available, 'The Chelsea Girls' (1966) and 'Lonesome Cowboys' (1967) are the best known while 'Trash', 'Heat' and 'Flesh' owe more to Paul Morrissey than Warhol - although they grew out of collaborative efforts that were to influence the way in which Warhol was to continue his film-making. Morrissey joined Warhol in August 1965 and, for almost a decade, it was Morrissey that worked on the production, distribution and exhibition of Warhol's films. Their relationship broke down after the financial



collapse of 'Flesh for Frankenstein' and 'Blood for Dracula' - two films, amongst others, that Warhol lent his name to, signifying ownership rather than authorship. (Strangely, one line from 'Flesh', "To know life you must first fuck death in the gall bladder", directly anticipates the cause of Warhol's own death). Indeed Morrissey's contribution to the two films, although credited as director, has been questioned in recent years and it has been



mystify the infamy which has been associated with his work.

POSITIONING THE IMAGE

If film is to be defined as 'a sequence of images of moving objects photographed by a camera and providing the optical illusion of continuous movement when projected onto a screen', Warhol's work scarcely exists within this exposition. And yet, there is something very pure about the nature of the films themselves and the way they comment upon the medium of film. Warhol, through genius or naivety, shot a large amount of his film on a fixed camera and reels of film (often silent) were connected together - rather than edited - leaving intact the over-exposed opening initial frames of footage. To the viewer this presents a somewhat shocking experience, you are forced to realise the material of the film itself. By concentrating the camera on a particular area for relatively long lengths of time the viewer is stripped of all the techniques of cinema that succeeds in suspending disbelief. The content of the films vary from the audacious 'Empire' (black and white, silent, eight hours running time) - made by focussing the camera unflinchingly on the Empire State Building, to 'Lonesome Cowboys' which employs both editing and dialogue in naive-cinema style. Throughout all his works Warhol makes the audience aware that they are there watching a film. Audience involvement is reduced to voyeurism.

"You could do more things watching my movies than with other kinds of movies: you could eat and drink and smoke and cough and look away and then look back and they'd still be there."

'Sleep' (1963), running six hours long but often shown cut down to less than half an hour, is just that. Actor John Giorno sleeps while Warhol films. One hundred and twenty rolls of uninterrupted footage of Giorno sleeping, each taken from a different angle. This format of construction relieves the viewer of the obligation to pay attention. The interest of much of these films is that they command attention without demanding attention. However, while much of Warhol's work repeats this film construction (camera as viewer, static, confined action) lets us look at the more exploitative titles, films whose content may attract more than just the hardened fan of underground film.

BLOW JOB, COUCH, FIST

'Blow Job' (1964, 45 minutes) is a portrait film in which the camera serves to record the effect of

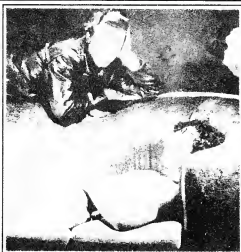
suggested that much of the footage should be attributed to a number of other individuals.

Since the early 1970's much of Warhol's work has been made available illicitly, previously on renegade film prints and more recently on pirate video tape. This underground existence has helped to further strengthen the Warhol legend and it is the intention of this brief overview of Warhol's work to examine the films, and de-

M k u l t r a

the actual fellatio. It may also be the longest 'reaction' shot in the cinema, forty-five minutes of a man's head and shoulders as his cock is being sucked. The camera never reveals the act itself, choosing to record the effect by concentrating the viewer's attention on the face of the man in question. Watching the film you want to see the sucking but Warhol never lets the camera stray. Here, you view on his terms. The film doesn't exploit because it fails to actually produce on screen the blow job, instead it reveals the act through the various expressions on the actor's face. He looks down, then away, looks left and then right and at the camera, creating a sense of space which exists outside of the frame, and effectively creating two other characters: the one giving the blow job and the voyeur - you. Warhol refuses to show explicit sex, but gestures that we can look anyway and in doing so he questions the function of the camera and of the viewer. This isn't to say that he isn't willing to show explicit sex; this is exemplified in 'Fist' (1965, forty minutes) where a man is bent over a whicker chair and is casually fist-fucked by three other men dressed as bikers. Here the content transcends pornography in as much as it doesn't involve itself in the act itself, and the participants of both 'Blow Job' and 'Fist' have a detachment from the act which serves to desensitise the viewer. 'Fist' examines the extreme end of what 'Blow Job' represents - it shows the actual act. Here there is more to occupy the viewer, the three bikers horseplay amongst themselves while deciding who is to do what to the figure who is bent over the chair. We presume the actual cocksucking in 'Blow Job' to start when the film starts, but here is no indication of this - it could have been happening hours before the viewer was introduced. The film, however, does offer a gesture of conclusion - which is unusual for many Warhol films of this period - when the reciprocant lights a cigarette and seems to signal the end of the act. 'Fist' starts with the boys messing around, idly chatting before rubbing grease onto the rear of the man who will receive the fisting, and ends as the second of the boys is plunging his fist and arm in and out of the reciprocant's backside. Again, Warhol chooses not to present the act, by, for example, selecting close-ups, he records it.

'Couch' (1964, 40 minutes) records various characters as they interact with each other around a couch. Appearing, among others, are Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. Characters walk in, walk off, lay naked - both men and women. There are various male-female, male-male acts of fellatio, cunnilingus, and rimming and at all times the camera records. Watching the film you are intently aware of your own being - that you are watching, almost uninvited, these private moments. Yet the nature of film means that there must be a viewer if the medium



if to serve its purpose. In the less intensive moments of the film the viewer finds themselves observing the surface of the image, the scratches, the tones between black and white. However, when the action is happening on-screen you find yourself holding your breath - what will happen next?

After working in a relatively naive manner (no technicians as



such, just advisers, little in the way of scripts) he began to structure his films more in the style of those he admired, employing soundtracks and actors. The first of many such productions came in 1967 when he made 'Lonesome Cowboys'. With 'Lonesome Cowboys', Warhol took his first decisive step towards making a more mainstream film, in so much that more thought went into its construction than any of his previous

works. 'Lonesome Cowboys' isn't Hollywood, but it does steal a number of cues from mainstream conventions, as well as Western Cinema's preoccupation with homoeroticism. On the surface the film is a Western, but there is only a few moments that connect it with that particular genre: a ride into the sunset, the costumes and a love scene. The film becomes the vehicle for a procession of gay/drag references and soft porn scenes that at times border on the burlesque. Warhol shot the film in just four days and it was his first 'location' film. Shot on 16mm, which was then blown up to 35mm for theatrical distribution, the film caused something of an outcry at the time of its release, indeed even the Federal Bureau of Investigation mentioned it in a file, unremarkably entitled 'Andy Warhol'. Their investigations into his films resulted in 'Lonesome Cowboys' being declared hardcore pornography by the New York City and State Courts and the film suffered a much hindered distribution which resulted in enormous loss in profits for both Warhol and his distributor.

"There's nothing really to understand in my work. I make experimental films and everyone thinks those are the kind where you see how much dirt you can get on the film, or when you zoom forward the camera keeps getting the wrong face or it jiggles all the time: but it's so easy to make movies, you can just shoot and every picture comes out right."

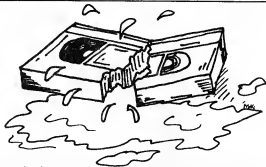
In submitting to Morrissey's influence in later films, Warhol never managed to reach maturity as a film-maker in his own right. His films should be read as those made by a conceptual artist at work, rather than those of a narrative film-maker as they share (along with many of his paintings and prints) a tendency towards stillness that inexorably chronicles the passage of time.

Unlike much conceptual art, especially film, Warhol succeeds in shocking his audience. Much of this work exists under the label of 'art', a bastard part of cinema, ignored by some, hailed by others. Warhol, who took his images of consumerism and sold them back to the consumer, never contested the authority of Hollywood. His films can be seen as mirrors on a personal world, chronicling the lives and times of those who lived there.



Trash
File

Dennis Price



Born *Dennistoun Franklyn John Rose-Price* in 1915, Dennis Price was an actor whose face may be familiar to many through his soft leading roles in British comedies such as *'Kind Hearts and Coronets'* and *'I'm All Right Jack'*. Distinguished by his rich voice and roguish looks he appeared in over forty movies but he will be best remembered by trash fans for his supporting roles in films as varied as Hammer's *Horror of Frankenstein* and Jess Franco's *Venus In Furs*.

Price was at his most popular in the late forties through to the early sixties, but as he got older he turned from comedy to taking roles in whatever material was offered him. Towards the end of his career his increasingly 'camp' nature (he came out of the closet in 1969) resulted in him taking on a number of increasingly garish effeminate roles.

His first venture into the genre was in 1964 in *Terrence Fisher's* under-rated *The Earth Dies Screaming*. The plot revolves around a group of survivors of some mysterious attack on earth which leaves all but a handful of humans alive. Alien robots wander around and revive the dead as white-eyed zombies. The nightmarish zombies then threaten the survivors (along with the robots who touch results in death). Typically Price plays the villain of the piece who is soon despatched part way through the film only to return as a threatening member of the living dead. It's a competent well made black and white

chiller produced on a low budget. Eagle-eyed viewers will notice that in the final shot, of a deserted airline runway, you can see a busy motorway in the background complete with rush-hour traffic. And I thought the earth was supposed to be desolate of human life - maybe it was the robots driving around?

His next feature was another under the helm of Fisher, *The Horror Of It All* (1964). This horror/comedy was about an American who visits an eccentric English family in order to ask permission to marry one of the family's daughters. The Addams style family are made up of a vampire, a werewolf, various witches and a homicidal maniac - needless to say, Price again featured as chief villain in this watered down unfunny comedy that attempted to parody the very genre it was set in. It remains very poor attempt at recreating the dark humour/horror of *James Whale's The Old Dark House* (a remake was also made the same year).

In 1965 Price took third billing in *Curse of the Voodoo* (aka *Curse of Simba/The Lion Man*), another thriller but this time about a big game hunter who is plagued by a jungle curse after he has slain a sacred lion. Although it may sound bland the film manages to stir quite a few thrills and boasts some very Lewtonesque use of shadow. In this British Allied Artists production Price plays friend to big game hunter *Bryant Haliday* (*The Projected Man*) and adds his now familiar blend of Englishness and eeriness.

After a four year gap Price returns to the genre as a sinister estate agent in the early slasher *The Haunted House of Horror* (Horror House, US). This uninspired movie was made by the talented *Michael Armstrong*, unfortunately Armstrong's version was partially reshot by hack director *Gerry Levy* (*The Body Stealers*) at the request of the production company Tigon. It still carries some clout, and has enough blood and stabbings to keep the audience awake. The story concerns a group of teens who party in a haunted house only to be slaughtered one by one by a mysterious killer. The murderer's identity is reasonably well hidden but the biggest stumbling block is the casting of teen idol Frankie Avalon (in this early thirties). Unfortunately Frankie ruins the first half of the film before, thankfully, being slashed much to the relief of audience and music lovers alike. Armstrong originally wanted the role of the psycho to be played by unknown actor *David Bowie* (then David Jones) but the studio opted for Mark Wynter who quickly dropped back into the void whence he came. Armstrong went on to direct the excellent *Mark of the Devil* in 1970 (aka *Brenn, Hexe, Brenn*) and to write the disappointing *House of Long Shadows* (1983).

Up until 1970 Price had only been dipping his toe into bloody waters, now the ball really starts rolling. Hammer decided to show-case their new talent in the *Horror of Frankenstein* (1970) and tried to do without the series

veterans *Peter Cushing* or director *Terence Fisher*. Rather than continuing the *Frankenstein* saga Hammer decided to re-make the original in the hope of launching a fresh series of sequels spaced with sex and blood. Unpleasant and unfunny in the extreme, *Horror of Frankenstein* is full of broad sarcastic humour made worse by ham *Ralph Bates* and a ridiculous monster played by *David Prowse*. Even though he only has a small role (credited as a grave robber), Price milks it to the full and to the embarrassment of the rest of the cast he gives the film's best performance.

From Hammer to *Jess Franco* is quite a jump but Price pops up in Franco's 1970 opus *Venus In Furs* (aka *Paroxysmus*) under the steady production of *Harry Alan Towers*. Obviously the result of some bad acid the plot features twist upon incredible twist as *James Darren* (of *Time Tunnel* Fame) sees the grisly murder of *Maria Rohm* by *Margaret Lee*, *Klaus Kinski* and *Dennis Price*. The convoluted, but entertaining, plot follows the demise of the murderers by the mysterious *Venus* (played as a doppelganger by *Lee*). The film has everything from S&M to lesbians and the soundtrack mixes soft jazz, middle rock and some *Manfred Mann* (played by *Manfred Mann*). *Darren*, obsessed by the sultry *Venus*, finally discovers that she is the spirit of the murdered woman (are you following this) and that he himself is dead. Price camps it to the full as a sleazy homosexual whose heart gives way when *Venus* drapes her seductive fur over him.

In 1971 it was back to Britain and Hammer films in the excellent *Twins of Evil* which was the third in their *Karnstein* trilogy. The plot concerns two central females - one being good and obedient, the other being a touch on the slutty side. Their Puritanical uncle (*Peter Cushing*) is confronted by these symbols of good and evil, the latter eventually taking form of vampirism. This effective variation of the witch-hunting/vampirism theme owes much to *Michael Reeves'* *Witchfinder General* and stands out

as a plus point in an otherwise poor period for Hammer. Price plays a servant to the evil *Count Karnstein* whose sadistic tendencies lead him into vampirism, his character eventually becomes a snack for one of the *Count's* recruits (the evil sister). Price delivers a solid rounded supporting role, adding to an already competent cast. The same year Price teamed up with *Bryant Halliday* again in *The Horror on Snape Island* (aka *Tower of Evil, Beyond the Fog*). This tight horror mystery concerns a group of archaeologists who sail out to an unknown island to dig up remnants of a Phoenician treasure. As expected they soon run into the murderous grasp of the unknown (and unseen). A detective in the party attempts to discover whether the murders are caused by a human killer or the curse of an ancient Phoenician axe. As one of the archaeologists Price delivers his usual 'I'm British, therefore scary so I could



be the killer' performances. In 1973, the year Price died, he delivered two excellent performances in two great British horror movies. The first was *Anthony Balch's Horror Hospital* which starred gravel-voiced horror ham *Michael Gough* as crazed *Dr Storm*. The good doctor has a torso

of third degree burns and drills holes into young person's brains in order to control them - to make slaves of the men and get the women to sleep with him. *Robert Askwith* (yuk) is the hero who visits *Gough's* hospital (which is in fact a health farm) thus distracting the doctor from his work. Amongst the curiosities presented in this pre video nasty is *Gough* slicing heads off, kinky leatherclad male slaves (who beat the shit out of anyone who steps out of line) and a mutant dwarf who is prone to removing skull tops with a hatchet and burning flesh with a cigarette. This is a truly crazed stomach-churner and neglected movie by director *Balch* who also collaborated with *William Burroughs* on *Towers Open Fire* and *The Cut-Ups*. Price, camping again, plays one of the health farm's oddities. Price's final performance was as one of the doomed theatre critics in *Douglas Hickox's Theatre of Blood*. As the mad actor *Edward Lionheart*, *Vincent Price* stages the deaths of the eight critics who denied him the accolade he believes he justly deserved. Each death is based on one of *Lionheart's* Shakespearean productions and *Dennis* ends his days drowned in a vat of wine. *Vincent Price* is truly in his element as he romps through a succession of tragic characters with grotesque and bloody results. The incredible cast (*Harry Andrews, Robert Cootie, Jack Hawkins, Michael Hordern, Arthur Lowe, Robert Morley, Diana Dors, Coral Browne, Diana Rigg* and *Ian Hendry*) make this film a fitting end to *Dennis Price's* remarkable career.

Price joined the ranks of those fading stars (*Joseph Cotton, Michael Gough*) who, rather than retire in semi-poverty, end up in appearing in low budget oddities. It's a fitting tribute to his talents that throughout all the above mentioned films he produced a good performance before the cameras, and any actor who has appeared in films such as *Venus in Furs*, *Horror Hospital*, *Theatre of Blood*, *Twins of Evil* and *The Earth Dies Screaming* is deserving of some recognition.

Print that *Matters*

From Beyond, no. 3, 50p (plus 27p stamp), 34 A4 pages

Editors Gary Sherratt and Steve Langton are to be congratulated in being courageous enough to give some coverage to the one film company that most British journals usually neglect - Hammer. This issue kicks off with a brief, but informative, overview of the Christopher Lee/Hammer/Dracula movies (starting with Dracula, Prince of Darkness as Dracula was covered in an earlier issue). You can tell by Gary's prose that he is a great fan of Hammer but he never lets his enthusiasm override his objectivity.

The review section makes particularly good reading as all the contributors are not re-gurgitating the familiar 'reviewing style' that is prevalent in so many other publications. Durrell Buxton's review of *Cannibal Holocaust* is a good example; he finishes his well-argued review with, "Cannibal Holocaust is the thinking persons' gore epic." It takes nerve to say something like that! Whether you agree or disagree it certainly makes provocative reading.

Also in this issue are book reviews, a fanzine round-up, and a look at the *Twilight Zone* (tv series). My only gripe with this issue was that the page margins were a little erratic - I had to pull the issue apart to read the text that had been swallowed by the staples!

Running at 34 pages *From Beyond* is excellent value - and there's some pretty nifty artwork as well.

Available from: Gary Sherratt/Steve Langton, 39 Saint Oswalds Crescent, Ashbourne, Derbyshire, DE6 1FS

Ooh! My Brain Hurts, no. 4, 50p (plus a 27p stamp), 20 A5 pages

When I received Daniel Auty's 'zine in the post I was somewhat taken aback. Unlike the majority of fanzines, *Ooh My Brain Hurts* is not photocopied, it's mimeographed (or produced something akin to that method) - pages are typed onto a stencil and then printed off an inked drum. This immediately reminded me of early issues of the American fanzine *Gore Creatures* (now *Midnight Marquee*) which were produced in the same way. The one drawback with this method is that you can't reproduce quality illustrations (though this issue does have a very good cover), but what it lacks in that department it makes up with its written content.

This issue includes well researched articles on Forty Years of Prison Movies and a History of the Cannibal Movie - both informative and concise. There's also comic, metal (heavy), book and film reviews. I'd only quibble with Daniel's review of Stuart Gordon's *Robo-Jox*, describing it as a fairly enjoyable romp - I had difficulty staying awake while watching this particular cinematic experience.

Ooh! My Brain Hurts is one of the few personal fanzines around that is not trying to compete with a market already bulging to overload with other publications. Daniel hopes to make the journal A4 for the next issue (due in early August), which will be no bad thing because reading this issue only made me want more.

Available from: Daniel Auty, 9 Andrew Close, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG11 2HY

3RD EYE, no. 4, £1.00, 36 A4 pages

The main reason for anyone buying this issue of *3RD EYE* would be the remarkable critique of Argento's *Inferno* and an enlightening interview with Ramsey Campbell. Other high-points include an impersonal view of *Der Todeskin* which brought back happy memories of *Cahiers du Cinéma* with its formal deconstruction-mode of appraisal. Andy Allard is also worth a mention for his article which reverses the popular fanzine trend of reviewing video 'nasties' by focusing his attention on films worth viewing that have not been banned by the DPP. He, quite rightly, points out that many 'nasties' have since gained an undeserved cult status because they have been banned. "The saddest consequence of the video nasties campaign has been the false esteem many of the so-called video nasties are now held..." Wise words indeed.

Further on Chris Cooke presents us with *Top Ten Urban Nightmares* (no, not a brief excursion through the London boroughs), and then there is brief look at the Mexican *Santo* movies. Finally there is the review section which, amongst the usual titles such as *Hardware*, *Opera*, et al, there are some excellent reviews of *Hercules in the Centre of the Earth*, *The Last Man on Earth* and *Franco's Faceless*.

With a few typographical errors aside *3RD EYE* is an enjoyable read and scattered through the issue are some very good video covers/promo artwork. The only inconsistency is Danny Robbins irrelevant comic strip which looks as though it was montaged onto a piece of denim before being copied.

Available from: 66a Peveril Street, Radford, Nottingham, NG7 4AH (cheques payable to 3RD EYE)

Strange Adventures, no. 29,
£1.20, 24 A4 pages

Strange Adventures is one of those remarkable magazines that manages, and I don't know how, to beat the deadlines on a monthly basis. The content is pretty varied, ranging from a look at director Walter Hill to a listing of apes in films. Red Dwarf is featured in the On The Box section and there are review sections for books and a particularly good one for comics. Best of all is the letters page which looks very healthy and this beg me to ask why more 'zines don't encourage more, or even some, feedback from their readers. Credit must go to Jeff Downes and Tony Lee for producing a fast-paced and dense news page - and they do this every month!

Strange Adventures has a good balance of text and images and much of the photographic material has reproduced very well. It's a readable, informative and informal journal that I'd recommend to anyone who wants to keep in touch with the fantasy genre on a monthly basis. Back issues (£1.10) are available from number 12 (January 1990) right up to the present issue and a year's subscription is available for the paltry sum of £12.00/\$35.00.

Available from: Tony Lee, Strange Adventures, 13 Hazely Combe, Arreton, Isle of Wight, PO30 3AJ. Strange Adventures is published on the tenth of each month.

Trash City, no. 9, £1.00 from the editorial address/£1.25 in the shops, 24 A5 pages

Although not strictly a film/fantasy journal, Trash City is worth buying just to savour the moderate indulgences of its editor Jim McLennan. A listing of the contents might provide an insight into what this particular 'zine has to offer: a Clint Eastwood filmography, letters, an 'Incredibly Bad Film' spot - Iron Angels, Conspiracy Corner - the

Gulf War, the Edge of Sanitary (ten favourite shower scenes in trash films - great title eh?), music, films, fiction and a look at sex comics.

Wow! Pretty groovy stuff. As Editor, Jim drops his liberal sensibilities at the mention of naked female flesh and then quickly picks them back up again when discussing the Gulf War. There's a very funny piece on moving home, in this case it's to Streatham and having lived there myself I thought this was an accurate a portrait as you can get. There's also an excellent capsule review section which covers recent releases such as Arachnophobia and Nuns on the Run and lots of other bits and pieces that are guaranteed to put a smile on your face.

If all this doesn't sound like the sort of thing you'd like dropping through your letter box you may be wrong. Trash City is fun and well worth reading. It's also got Miss Kinski on the back page.

Available from: Jim McLennan, 7 Tummons Gardens, South Norwood Hill, London, SE25

Subterrene, no.6, 50p (plus a 33p stamp), 30 A4 pages

Anthony Cawood's journal is more of a bulletin than a magazine and it generally features a strongly review-only format, with a page dedicated to news and other 'zines. It contains an esoteric mix of subject matter that includes Cronenberg's Stereo and Crimes of the Future, Umberto Lenzi's The Cynic, The Rat and The Fist and Lucio Fulci's Murder Rock - Dancing Death. Subterrene could easily have been tedious reading because of its limited format - no columns, few graphics and limited typeface - but, due to the variety of reviewers (and their styles), it isn't. In fact it's surprisingly refreshing - new views on older movies and a good coverage of recent(ish) material, almost exclusively aimed at fans of horror movies.

Although the majority of the text is accurate there are a few unforgivable blunders and I took exception to a lot of what reviewer 'Psychobabbling Jonathan' had to say (and the way he said it) - but what the heck, that's the reason you buy fanzines. A good way to spend fifty pence.

Available from: Anthony Cawood, 6 Daleside Avenue, Pudsey, Leeds, LS28 8HD.

Finally...

Samhain, the mainstay of British Fandom, continues its rise in popularity (and price). If you want to keep in contact with the mainstream then Sam is for you, if you don't then Sam is still probably for you - but then you must already know that.

In The Flesh, like Samhain, is another semi-pro journal that delivers its promise of being a magazine with guts - blood, slashings, rippings and other good stuff is guaranteed courtesy of editor Steve C. Well worth checking if you haven't come across a copy, In The Flesh is steadily becoming a British equivalent to Chas Balun's Deep Red.

Samhain, £1.80 by post (or £1.55 from shops), 19 Elm Grove Road, Topsham, Exeter, Devon, EX3 0EQ

In The Flesh, £1.90 by post (or £1.40 from shops), Steve C, Box 1, Garageland, Focus, Princess Victoria Street, Clifton, Bristol, BS8 4BP



The Fifth Column



Once upon a time there was 'The Horror Film', a simple label for an increasingly complex form of film. This label seemed appropriate for the vast majority of productions from Universal's movies in the thirties to Hammer's productions of the late fifties, indeed big name studio support guaranteed that their output could neatly be classified as one genre product or another. The 'horror' movie, however, was maturing, developing and crossing genres in the nature of its storylines. Howard Hawks' 'The Thing' was born from the paranoia of the fifties but it elevated itself out of the category of science fiction and crossed over into the nature of the horror film - even with its science fiction trappings, 'The Thing' was a very scary movie.

It wasn't until the sixties when independent production companies started churning out material for the drive-in/exploitation market in America that the terms and references for what was and what wasn't a 'horror' film became questioned. Russ Meyer's films certainly weren't 'horror' but they did rely upon excessive (by current standards) violence and sex. The category 'Exploitation Film' seemed to nicely wrap up all the little oddities that popped out of screens of cinemagoers in late fifties and throughout the sixties. The point of all this is not so much a definition of horror movies or science fiction movies, but more a comment on the label branded onto every film that is released. Today, in the nineties, 'Trash' films are popular - witness the sales of the John Waters' movies on video - but 'trash' is only a subdivision of exploitation; alongside this there is sleaze, cult, camp, kitsch, rock 'n' roll, delinquent and drug movies.

It seems that talking head film critics of the media need to categorise films in order to appraise them, there also seem to be as many categories to drop a film into as there as films to label. The 'Splatter' movies of the early eighties became sub-divided into bodycount, teenkill, stalk and slash; this developed into, at various times, Eco-horror, psycho movies, cannibal movies (sub sub divided into Third World movies): the list is endless. Much of the blame can be laid at the doorstep of the genre press who, in order to simplify their understanding of the genre at the expense of their readers' intelligence, relentlessly label and redefine the definition of what a horror movie is so they can widen the range of films they can cover in their pages. I don't believe Hitchcock's 'Psycho' to be a horror film; update 'Psycho' and shoot it from the killer's viewpoint and you get 'Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer' - not a horror film. A horrible, terrifying movie, yes, but its nihilistic star exists more in the realm of the real (and that is where the horror comes from) than in the world of nightmare and fantasy where the true roots of the horror film are based. Similarly 'Miracle Mile' is fiction born from the realities of 'Atomic Cafe', because it is terrifying it doesn't mean it is a horror movie. 'Miracle Mile' is no more a horror film than 'The China Syndrome'.

Which brings me back to where I started, the categorising of films. Labels are fine if there are standards and if everyone sticks to them. Unfortunately there are too many 'clever' categories to drop movies into. When does 'Don't Look Now' stop being an 'Art House' film and become a horror movie? Obviously, it is both: to the Art House crowd it is art, to the horror film crowd it is horror. In the end all definitions can be subjective, it

is up to you to decide - if you really need to.

The point of all this is a gripe I have with the genre press, both pro and fanzines alike. Now you may disagree with what I've said about 'Henry', fair enough, you may even say that by my standards 'The Texas Chainsaw Massacre' is not a horror film (though I'd challenge anyone to try running around with a chainsaw for minutes on end, swinging it around against the drive of the internal gyroscope and then tell me that the movie isn't based in fantasy!). What I hate is the way genre publications pull in non-genre movies and in doing so thus label them as horror movies. If they need to cover or review a film like 'Combat Shock' then surely space should be devoted to 'Platoon' which, although it is less intense and bloody, is more terrifying. The impression I get is that so many are too keen to fill their pages with reviews of as many movies as they can within their definition of 'horror'; everybody wants to 'discover' the next 'Night of the Living Dead', 'Evil Dead' or 'Nekromantik'. I would prefer to see more analysis of key films and themes rather than superficial, and often subjective, reviews, uninteresting interviews and not very informative set reports. When it's good it's great, when it's bad it's terrible.

Both pro and fanzines often come up with some excellent, pertinent coverage, but looking at the current state of what is on sale on the shelves of Forbidden Planet, there seems to be a downturn for the worst in genre publishing. I have deliberately not named names (and this publication is as guilty as the rest), but you know where the rot lies.

Zach Waugh

Reviews

Food for
your tube!

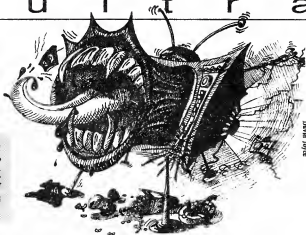
Reviewers:

Mario Pinelli - MP

Andrej Karczewski - AK

Andy Waugh - AW

Pete Gunner - PG



David Joyce

"...the whole film lacks style or reasoning..."

ZOMBIE 90: Extreme Pestilence

Dir. Andreas Schnaas

Starring: Mathias Ker, Ralph Hess, Christian Biallas

A plane carrying an anti-AIDS vaccine crashes and the drug causes the dead to rise. Mayhem ensues, the authorities try to cover up what is going on - mostly people being munched by the living dead - the rest of the plot concerns two doctors attempt to clear up the carnage.

This is a peculiar film that reads as a cross of Romero's *The Crazies* and *Night of the Living Dead* via Fulci's *Zombie Flesh eaters* - not a bad thing except the whole production is so dreadful and cheap it cannot do justice to the obvious aspirations of the film makers themselves (notably director Schnaas and Executive Producer Steve Aquilina). If you've seen *Violent Shit*, Aquilina's previous production, then you've got a good idea of what to expect - a lot of blood for little in the way of Deutsche Marks. The gore is very intense and occurs with frightening regularity - highlights include a baby being torn in half (I'm always in favour of kiddies being

mangled in movies - there isn't enough of it) and constant bitings and tearing of limbs, there's even an inspired chainsaw slicing. The problem is that on the whole it isn't very convincing and the whole film lacks any style or reasoning (an AIDS vaccine that causes the dead to rise - what would it do to the living?).

As amateurish as it is, *Zombie 90* is almost likeable, but you can't help but feel guilty watching it - what sort of audience was it made for? Films like this aren't made to be discussed, they are made to be enjoyed. I'm all for lots of blood and guts but there isn't any framework in which you can view a film like this. It has no redeeming values in any department except for the tacky gross-out scenes - if these are values. So, for fans of very (and I stress the word very) cheap gore movies, this is a must. Once you've numbed yourself to the dreadfully dubbed dialogue (oh, that's another plus point) this is a real party tape. Light a joint, sit back and enjoy.

For anyone, else I'd recommend giving it a miss and certainly not forking out nearly twenty pounds for a legit copy - for that sort of money you could make your own *Zombie 91* or *92* or *93* or *94*....

PG

"wait until you see her saw his genitals off!"

NEKROMANTIK 2

Dir. Jorg Buttgerott

Starring: Monika M, Mark Reeder, Simone Spörl
93m

Beginning with Rob's suicide from the end of *Nekromantik I*, we quickly move to the cemetery where our deceased hero is buried. Enter Monika M. (who has read about Rob's exploits in the papers) she digs him up, dusts him off and takes her 'hero' home and makes love, unsuccessfully, to the corpse. After falling for Mark Reeder, Monika decides to return Rob to the grave and carefully cuts him up, keeping his head and genitals for herself. Mark, unfortunately, doesn't measure up to Rob and as their relationship grows Monika becomes more and more psychotic. She eventually decides that what she needs is the best of both men...

Through various means I only managed to get one viewing of the tape for *Nekromantik 2*, and this review is based on my notes written two hours after watching the movie - by this time I'd forgotten the character's names! (*that's the last film you'll be reviewing - Ed*). However, what I can give you is an impression of the film - and what an

impression it is! (*Der Todeskin - post modernist, and now an impressionist review?* Ed). Buttergett is a perverse and inspiring director and has grown in leaps and bounds since *Necromantik I*, the sheer overwhelming blackness of the original has been faithfully reproduced tempered with touches of humour (though equally dark).

Although the plot is straightforward, Buttergett has used its simplicity to powerful effect, adding almost surreal elements to the fly-on-the-wall style narrative. Some of the more tortuous scenes are made more effective by filming in almost real time and thus we experience alongside the characters what is happening on screen. This empathic connection is fully realised in the film's harrowing final scenes. Buttergett certainly isn't shy of revealing all to his audience, in one particularly explicit scene Bob's corpse is cut up into pieces by Monika who uses a saw - the sound alone is gruelling, but wait until you see her saw his genitals off! Having said that Buttergett could have easily thrown in gore and splatter just to cater for his audience, but he doesn't. The corpse-chopping and fucking follows the narrative and isn't placed purely for sensation.

Unlike many other sequels to 'classic' movies, *Nekromantik 2* is an evolution of the first and not a glossed over re-make of the original (like, for example, *Predator 2*). Alongside Whale's *The Bride of Frankenstein*, Romero's *Day of the Dead* and films of that ilk, *Nekromantik 2* stands alone as being equal if not superior to the original. Jorg Buttergett is a perverse and original director who has successfully merged the often maligned blood and guts genre of film with true art. Sick, degenerate or genius, Buttergett is a true auteur. He presents us with films that concern him, and his work deserves the place reserved for them in the gallery of the most important horror films of the last twenty years.

PG

"A definite must for all connoisseurs of skin-slicing cinema..."

Mad Ron's Prevues from Hell

1987/Dir. Jim Monaco

(video only) Hosted by Nick the Ventriloquist and 'Happy'
80m

First the bad news: to enjoy this wonderful collection of pulse-pounding, terror trailers you have to sit through the cornball humour of Nick (the pathetic) ventriloquist and his zombie dummy 'Happy'. Their attempts at humour is so nauseating you may have to put a pencil between your teeth to stop yourself gnashing at the television set. The scenario is this: Nick and Happy are showing Mad Ron's trailers to a theatre of afflictionados, ie zombies (is this a comment on the people who enjoy these kind of movies?), and between every five or six trailers we go back to either Nick and the dead doll or the zombies for some 'humorous' padding. Anyway, forgetting all that, contained in the tape are mind-bending, breath-taking trailers for 51 of your favourite films and obscurities. Even if you're not a movie trailer maniac like me, you'll still be amazed at the collection of titles on show, you'll drop dead at the double bill of *I Drink Your Blood* and *I Eat Your Skin*, thrill to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, go dopey over *Deranged*, count the corpses in *Three on a Meathook*, claw at *The Corpse Grinders*, pant to *The Undertaker and his Pals*, lick your lips at *Love Me Deadly*, be chilled by *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things*, ponder the bizarre *Maniacs are Loose!*, drool over *Cannibal Girls*, be cut up over *Torso*, cheer at the deadly double *Blood Spattered Bride* and *I Dismember Mama*, be aghast at *The Ghastly Ones*, understand the "cinematic art" of *The Wizard of Gore* (introduced by Montag himself).

And there's more! You'll step *Beyond the Door*, dip yourself in *Deep Red*, see *Sisters*, experience the Devil's *Nightmare*, view *The House of Exorcism*, last after *Lady Frankenstein*, fantasize over *Flesh Feast*, anthologise over *Tales from the Crypt* and the *Vault of Horror*, heckle the *Horror of the Zombies*, belch at the *Bloodedaters*, be mystified by the terror triple *Revenge of the Living Dead/ Curse of the Living Dead/Fangs of the Living Dead*, boo at the *Diabolical Dr Z* (pronounce that initial 'zee'), go mondo mad over *Africa Blood and Guts*, nauseate at the *Night of Bloody Horror*, shriek to *Silent Night*, *Evil Night*, marvel at *Mutations*, and yes, there's more!

Be deafened by *The House that Screamed*, barf at *Blood and Lace*, titter at *2000 Maniacs*, wonder at *Night of the Living Dead*, find faith in *God Told Me To*, see the *Horror on Snake Island*, wank to *Wildcat Women*, be dominated by *Ilse: She Wolf of the SS*, marvel at the *Man from Deep River*; you'll repeat to yourself "it's only a movie" to *The Last House on the Left*, you'll cower at *Carnage*, go colour blind with *Colour Me Blood Red*, be mystified by *The Mad Doctor of Blood Island*, shiver to *Silent Night*, *Bloody Night*, get sadistic in the *Bloody Pit of Horror* and finally be awed by the *Night of the Bloody Apes*. Wow! This tape is a definite must for all connoisseurs of skin-slicing cinema. The *I Drink Your Blood/I Eat Your Skin* trailer is particularly gory, especially if you've only seen the theatrical release - wisely they don't use any footage from the sleep-inducing *I Eat Your Skin* in this particular piece of cinematic synopsis. Other treats include the rare trailer for Argento's *Deep Red*, the equally rare trailer for the bizarre *Lady Frankenstein* and the obscure trailer for the obscure *Revenge/ Curse/Fangs of the Living Dead*. There are plenty of laughs to be had at the expense of some of the narrators whose voice-over dialogue range from the ridiculous *The Maniacs are Loose!* to the pictureless perils suggested in *Night of Bloody Horror*. A tape well worth hunting down.

AK

The Brain from Planet Arous

1958/Dir. Nathan Hertz

Starring: John Agar, Robert Fuller, Joyce Meadows

A nuclear physicist (Agar) investigating a strange cave recently burrowed into the side of Mystery Mountain is taken over by the brain of the title. Soon the creature, Gor, reveals he not only wants to dominate Agar, but the whole world. To show he means business he destroys an airplane and begins to make advances on the scientist's girlfriend (Meadows). A rival alien brain (Vol) arrives to help Meadows destroy the evil Gor, waiting until it has manifested itself outside the body of her boyfriend she destroys the monster with an axe.

This wonderful Agar vehicle has one of the best brains on a budget to be featured in a movie (only one place behind the spinal-columned creatures of *Fiend Without A Face*): a huge five foot glowing brain with eyes and an eerie voice that shifts into the body of nice-guy Agar. When possessed by Gor, Agar attempts to rape his girlfriend, that's when she realises there's something not quite right about her goody goody boyfriend. He pulls at her dress and tries to kiss her hard on the lips, she backs away, "You've been working too hard!" she shouts, the unsated Agar/Gor backs off with the line "Don't exert me, I'm all right!" The film is full of equally wacky dialogue.

A grinning black-eyed Gor/Agar also makes an incredible image as he laughs at his destruction of a plane. That plus the two alien brains are perfect fodder for fans of high camp horror of the fifties. Nathan Hertz's direction is standard but he is better known for the amazing female colossus epic, *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman*, made a year earlier. Agar fans will want to add this, his best movie, to their collection, NOW!

MP

The Corpse Grinders

1971/Dir. Ted V Mikels

Sean Kenney, Monika Kelly, Sanford Mitchell

Two evil cat food manufacturers (who use cripples as cheap labour) buy fresh corpses from a grave-robbing couple and put the dead bodies through their corpse grinding machine. The resulting pet food turns cats into wild animals that attack their owners. A suspicious vet and his nurse investigate a spate of cat attacks and go undercover in order to unravel the mystery of the cat food factory.

A seemingly wild storyline is let down by Mikels' plodding direction and the non-talents of all involved. The actual corpse grinding machine is a very fake looking box with lights on one side, a hole at one end for feeding the bodies into, and a mincing machine at the other end - where mince meat is pushed through. Considering how slowly the 'food' appears out of the machine it would be surprising if the factory managed to produce more than fifteen cans of food a day.

But if you can sit through the dragging direction you'll enjoy two wonderful cat attacks (ie actors holding docile felines to their throats to the recorded noises of, what sounds like, cats having sex), some wonderful dialogue, and some very strange editing where Mikels flashes the corpse grinding machine onto the screen at opportune moments. He also has quite a penchant for vivid colour, especially in the interior shots when the screen is drenched in reds, blues and greens - very odd.

Laughs are also to be had by the fake cemetery scenes (someone's garden?) and the dead-pan serious acting of the villains. I'd suggest you view this film in the middle of the afternoon when you're wide awake, this is not late night fare.

AK

Django

1966/Dir. Sergio Corbucci

Staring Franco Nero, Jose Bodalo, Angel Alvarez

Set shortly after the Civil War on the American/Mexican border a group of bandits whip a woman only to be slaughtered by a clan of red-hooded henchmen under the employ of a Southern Major. The Klansmen then prepare to burn the woman at the stake: enter Django who shoots them and makes tracks for the next town with his own coffin in tow. Taking part in the gang war that is raging in the town, Django sides with both parties shooting and aiding with equal ferociousness. After a raid on a border fort Django double-crosses his colleagues but is finally cornered in a graveyard...

Almost unheard of, Django is the cult western that makes the work of *Sergio Leone* dull by comparison.

Nightmarish, bloody and brutal, *Franco Nero's* anti-hero, dressed in duster, worn boots and soldier's trousers, borders on the mystical in this film which spawned eighteen sequels, including *Django The Bastard*, *Django The Avenger*, *Django Get A Coffin Ready* and *Nude Django*.

There's lots of blood and violence and a style of image-making that can be seen as an influence in Jodorowsky's *Santa Sangre* amongst others. Packed with black humour and surrealism the film boasts a superb soundtrack that perfectly orchestrates the scenes of manic kitsch and gruesome murder that without occur reason or explanation.

This, the most violent of the Spaghetti Westerns, has been uncensored in Britain for twenty-five years but has led a thriving existence on pirate video for years. There's so much to be enjoyed in this film - beg, borrow or steal a copy of this extraordinary visual experience!

PG

Castle of the Walking Dead

aka *The Blood Demon* (GB and US theatrical), *The Torture Chamber of Dr Sadism* (US tv and Southeast Asia theatrical), *Die Schlangengrube und das Pendel* (German original) 1967/Dir. Harald Reinl

Starring: Lex Barker, Karin Dor, Christopher Lee
75m (85m German version)

The infamous Count Regula (Lee) is sentenced to be executed for murdering twelve virgins, but before he dies he swears vengeance on those responsible. Thirty-five years later a Baroness and her lawyer are mysteriously invited to Blood Castle and, with the help of a monk (who turns out to be a highwayman) they travel through a forest of hanging corpses to reach the remains of the castle. A green-blooded servant tells them that he intends to revive the count who has been living in suspended animation, needing one more maiden to make up the thirteen necessary to make the count immortal. The Baroness is the intended victim and her lawyer turns out to be the son of the man who condemned Regula all those years ago - he is quickly put to torture under a swinging pendulum while the Baroness is mentally tortured by snakes, buzzards and spiders prior to her death. However, the lawyer breaks free and saves the Baroness; when confronted with a diamond-studded cross the evil Count and his henchman disintegrate along with the castle and the forest of evil.

This sixties German production slipped quickly through British cinemas at the time of its release which is a shame because it boasts an excellent performance by Lee and some truly eerie and atmospheric scenes - particularly the forest full of corpses. *Lex Barker* (an ex Tarzan) at the time was the number one leading man in European films (best remembered in Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*) and the leading lady, *Karin Dor* (also the director's wife) was one of the leading ladies in German cinema at the time. Add to this the talents of a very expressionistic looking

Lee and you have a real classic slice of gothic drama in the style of a Grimm's fairy tale. The plot is supposedly based on Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum*, but apart from the appearance of a pendulum there is no other connection. The film seems to borrow more from the romance of *Stoker's Dracula* (guess where they got the name Regula from) and *Bava's Black Sunday*, as Lee is forced to wear an iron mask with spikes going through his face akin to the punishment of *Barbara Steele*. Regardless of its sources this is an excellent piece of European gothic horror with an imaginative full-blooded visual style that is both weird and wondrous. **AW**

Count Yorga, Vampire

1970/Dir. Robert Kelljan

Starring: Robert Quarry, Roger Perry, Michael Murphy, Dona Anders
91m

Count Yorga, a modern day vampire living in Los Angeles, tries to revive his dead love at a seance, but fails. He then decides to off his beloved's daughter and her circle of friends. A doctor wises up to what's happening and enters Yorga's home for a final battle with the murderous Count.

Firstly, I never liked fat-faced Robert Quarry and was pleased that AIP's attempts to launch him as the new Christopher Lee/Vincent Price of the 1970s failed. However this first in the Yorga trilogy (*Return of Count Yorga* and its quasi-sequel *The Deathmaster* being the others) does show some flair from Quarry in his portrayal of a clever, debonair and often vicious vampire. There's also excellent acting by the film's hero (Roger Perry) and the supporting cast - including the obligatory henchman, Brudah (played with simple-minded nastiness by Edward Walsh). The film packs a few punches, notably the scene of a recent victim of the Count feeding off a kitten, and a jolting final shot.

Director Kelljan builds a firm layer of tension using titled camera angles and

adds twist after twist up until the film's ending, leaving Yorga intact for the sequel at the expense of all the cast.

The film also has a certain amount of 1970s sleaze appeal, bits of not too explicit sex and violence and is a refreshing break from the run-of-the-mill vampire movies of the seventies - certainly an improvement over Hammer's attempts to introduce their Count into a modern day setting. Although child-star Quarry soon went down the hill into the land of AIPs z grade productions, *Count Yorga, Vampire* proves that with the right material he could have had a stake in the big time. A pity. **AK**

The Twilight People

1972/Dir. Eddie Romero

Starring: John Ashley, Pat Woodell, Pam Grier

A mad doctor working on genetic experiments on an isolated island plans to create a master race of animal/people. Enter game hunter Ashley who is promptly marked for the scientist's next experiment...

Any film by Romero is a must for trash fans seeking a change from the Ashley/Romero trilogy *Brides of Blood*, *Mad Doctor of Blood Island* and *Beast of Blood* - and this is it. Yet again shot in the (inexpensive) Philippines Romero's script is a poor adaption of *The Island of Lost Souls* and serves as an excuse to show off the film's human guinea pigs. *See the ape man! See the panther woman! See the Bat Man who actually flies in the films closing reel! See the poor make-up! See the evil scientist turn his wife (Grier) into a tree!* Iron-jawed Ashley, always a good lead, triumphs over the evil scientist and thwarts his plans of creating a Nazi inspired master race in this entertaining and extremely enjoyable piece of hokum. Who cares if the make-up isn't top notch - how many films feature bat men in glorious garish colour! Yep, this is the real thing: bargain basement

art produced by and starring teen-star turned mainstream-failure John Ashley.

Keep your eye open to terrestrial tv listings. The *Twilight People* occasionally pops up on the independents' late night schedule. AK

"...genuine inventive giallo at its best"

TERROR AT THE OPERA

Dir. Dario Argento

Starring: Cristina Marsillach, Ian Charleson
91m

A tempestuous diva of a production of *Macbeth* leaves the theatre after an argument with one-time horror film director turned opera director Mark (Ian Charleson) and is knocked down outside the opera house by a passing vehicle. The role of Lady *Macbeth* goes to her understudy Betty (Cristina Marsillach), who earns the appreciation of the critics and a mysterious sadistic killer. Capturing Betty at various times the killer proceeds to kill members of the cast and crew in front of her. Realising there is some link with the killer and her own past Betty enlists the help of Mark in finding out who is the owl-masked murderer - all is revealed during a live performance of the play...

At last, after much deliberation by its UK distributors, *Opera* - or rather *Terror at the Opera* - is available over the counter with little intrusion by the BBFC's scissors. The plot, like all of Argento's films, is a thin ground onto which he pastes a series of technically inspired sequences. *Opera* is a summary of Argento's themes and pre-occupations in his films, it serves as a homage to his past work, outdoing and updating all the show-stopping artistic wizardry that has made him the most consistent auteur in the genre today.

The film starts with the image of the opera house interior reflected in the eye of a raven - the raven motif becomes a relevant factor in the plot and thereafter the film cumulates a series of devastating and outrageous

sequences, one of the most amazing of which must be the murderer desperately trying to retrieve a piece of evidence from the throat of one of his victims - this is genuine inventive giallo at its best.

Two years old, *Opera* suffers from being almost stale news - most of you will know the film inside-out perhaps without even having seen it yet. The BBFC have trimmed 32 seconds from the video release, notably in the more violent murder scenes and some of the original plot has been condensed to the benefit of the pace of the film (as with the original cinema version). Argento fans should search out for the Italian (Italian language) video version which is uncut or, if your Italian only stretches to four varieties of pasta, then try to get a hold of the Australian (English language) release which has all the gore, but lacks nearly ten minutes of plot (the Italian cinema version, typically, has no gore). Enthusiasts may also be interested in *Michael (The Church) Soavi's* excellent documentary: *Oprae - The Making of Opera*, which also includes many behind-the-scenes shots as well as most of the movie's bloodiest sequences.

This film testifies to the fact that Argento knows his audience and has the capability and courage to deliver the goods - for us there can be no greater compliment. Highly recommended. MP

Halloween 5

Dir. Dominique Othenin-Girard

Starring: Danielle Harris, Ellie Cornell,
Donald Pleasance
1990/96m

Michael Myers returns to menace Haddonfield, and is once again psychically linked to Jamie (Danielle Harris) who attempts to warn her guardian Raquel (Ellie Cornell) that the shape is back in town. Myers is finally despatched after snuffing a few teens.

Dreadful. There is nothing to recommend this film to anyone, the

most interesting aspect is the name of the director. Bland, cheap and bottom barrel production values, this is a film that fails without even trying. Even Donald Pleasance, who always manages to put some gusto into his roles, looks bored. So will you. Avoid at all costs and picket rental shops stocking this celluloid waste of time. AK

Histoires Extraordinaires

aka Tales of Mystery and Imagination, Spirits of the Dead (US)

1967/Dirs. Louis Malle, Roger Vadim, Federico Fellini
Briditte Bardot, Jane Fonda, Terence Stamp, Peter Fonda
121m

Three tales based on the writings of Edgar Allen Poe. Louis Malle's 'William Wilson's Sketch' features Alain Delon haunted by his superior double, Roger Vadim's 'Metzengerstein' teaches vice madam Jane Fonda that she can't have everything she wants and Federico Fellini's 'Toby Dammit' (also known as 'Don't Bet Heads With the Devil') charts the demise of an alcoholic and psychotic actor (Stamp) who is cast as Christ in a new film.

This quite incredible collection of tales brings together, in anthology form, the talents of Malle, Vadim and Fellini with great bravura. The first story is perhaps the weakest but there is a little whipping (of Bardot) and sadism thrown in to keep audiences on their toes and a screaming schoolboy is lowered into a vat of rats. Of more interest is 'Metzengerstein' starring brother and sister Fonda. Director Vadim (Fonda's husband at the time) creates some subtle sadism as he charts the vices of wicked Jane who attempts to seduce the neighbouring landowner (her cousin) Peter. Unable to get his amorous attentions she plots revenge by arranging to have his stables burnt down, thus killing his prize horse, unfortunately brave Peter ventures into the fire to save the animal only to die himself. Out of the flames gallops the horse, right into Jane's hands. After

this Vadim explores the relationship between the female Fonda and the horse - which becomes a symbol of the man she couldn't have. At the same time she demands that a tapestry burnt in the fire should be repaired, and it is this tapestry which, in pictures, depicts her own demise. In the final scene she is resigned to having the horse lead her to her own death amidst a countryside on fire. Lots of hints at incest and bestiality with a few orgies thrown in for good measure. Fellini's contribution is even more incredible as hell-bent actor Stamp teeters on the brink of incoherent madness. Fellini's typically wild and stylish camerawork and fast editing style makes this a grand tour de force of speed and chaos supported, in no small way, by the cinematography of Mario Bava.

All three stories are compact examples of all three directors at their best showing that the European interpretation of Poe can be just as exciting as that of Corman, or even Argento/Romero. Fans of Euro-cinema will find this a fresh hit of colourful subtleties and characters that is both thought provoking and imaginative.

The American version has the stories appearing in reverse order with narration by Vincent Price and a British sell-thru was released in 1987 under the title of Powers of Evil (under the Video Xtasy label), but this only features the Vadim and Fellini stories, cut down to a mere 77m.

AK

Maniac Cop 2

Dir. William Lustig
Starring: Robert Davi, Claudia Christian, Bruce Campbell
1991/88m

Dead cop Cordell returns after his fiery demise and teams up with serial killer Turkell. After killing his two enemies from the first movie (Campbell and Laurene Landon), Cordell is hunted by cop Robert Davi and the hunt ends in a deserted prison where Cordell is incinerated once more.

With only a few faults (the major one being killing off Campbell and Landon) Maniac Cop 2 is exciting stuff. Cohen's script is tight and neat and the teaming of Cordell (Robert D'Zar) with killer Turkell is a welcome addition. Like many mainstream sequels, the gore is toned down in favour of more violence and action, but this is no bad thing. Complete with a number of excellent action sequences this production stands tall against the original.

AW

Stepfather II

Dir. Jeff Burr
Starring Terry O'Quinn, Meg Foster, Caroline Williams
1991/85m

After surviving his apparently fatal end at the conclusion of the original, Jerry Blake is now becomes a model patient at a lunatic asylum. He soon escapes and, under the guise of being a family counsellor, susses out his next family (Meg Foster). She agrees to marry him but postgirl Caroline Williams knows something isn't quite right...

Director Burr puts together a reasonable sequel and once again Terry O'Quinn distinguishes himself as a believable psycho, being both charming and homicidal. Unfortunately the script allows for too many generic trappings, although in its favour it isn't a simple re-make of the original. What made the original character of Blake so credible is now lost in some improbable scripting.

Burr's direction is more pacy than the awkward contrivances of his Texas Chainsaw Massacre 3, but it doesn't rise above the level of being no more than competent. A good try.

PG

"No source shall be spared"

HARDWARE

Dir. Richard Stanley
Starring: Dylan McDermott, Stacey Travis, John Lynch
90m

The remains of an experimental droid are dug up in a wasteland and sold to fellow scavenger Mo (Dylan McDermott) who in turn presents the head and various bits to his girlfriend Jill (Stacey Travis) as a Christmas present. Jill incorporates the parts into one of her sculptures and it isn't long before the droid manages to rebuild itself from the scrap metal in Jill's apartment before going on a killing spree. First to be offed is slimy peeping tom neighbour Lincoln (William Hookins) who has his eyes poked out, is drilled in the stomach (and for good measure a small circular saw is thrown in as well).

After an extended struggle between the droid and Jill in the confines of her apartment she manages to blow the cyborg up with the help of the oxyacetylene gas she uses in her junk sculpture. In bursts Mo and the concierge of the apartment block who appear just in time to blow the re-animated Mark 13 out of the window. The droid is, as you may have guessed, not out for the count yet, it revives itself and continues to kill, spiking Mo with its fatal poison before finally coming to an end under the faucet of a shower head - water being its one weakness (it was originally designed for fighting in arid weather conditions). As the film ends radio DJ Angry Bob (Iggy Pop) announces that mass production of the new Mark 13 cyborg has just been approved. In a mirror image of the opening shot a figure walks back into the wasteland - is it Mo or is it Jill?

Hardware tries hard to be a bit of everything, stealing genre conventions at random and throwing in a High Plains Drifter opening and ending for no other reason than to hint at the mystical. What could have been a very good movie is let down by the very pretensions it expects its audience to accept. The few main characters are sketched out so thinly any dramatic effect by putting them in peril is quickly lost, indeed the only real character in the film is the sleazy neighbour, played by the excellent

William Hootkins, who spies on Jill from his room opposite while she makes love to Mo. Even the inclusion of Mo's friend Shades (John Lynch) doesn't have any purpose to the plot except to hint that he may be the weirdo who is pestering Jill, even this red herring is quickly discarded as Lincoln makes his appearance soon afterwards. Much of the excellent set design is lost in the unnecessary and excessive lighting and it is here that director Stanley betrays his pop video origins. Good lighting does not a good film make - too many red skies and hi-tech interiors are the staple of car commercials not movies. Mark 13, the name given to the droid, is most effective in close up, the skull image is particularly inspiring unlike body of the machine which owes more to *Carlo Rambaldi's Alien Queen* (minus its skin) with its insect origins than to anything else. Furthermore, Stanley has chosen to retread Ripley Scott's *Alien* in the film's final confrontation between heroine and antagonist,

creating a feeling of claustrophobia using steam and strobe lights with questionable results. Although there is a grudging credit to 2000 AD's 'Future Shock' as a source for the screenplay, Stanley seems to have gone one step back and plagiarised their source, the writings of *Philip K Dick*. He has set his story against the backdrop of a future society where the lead character smokes dope out of cigarette packets and where the diving line between religion and drug culture is blurred. On the whole the film fails by sticking its fingers into too many apple pies - starting with a Leone inspired drifter in the hills and ending with the cliché 'it's not dead yet' ending expected by even the most naive audience, perhaps Stanley's motto was 'No source shall be spared'.

There are some plus marks to be gained, notably the drug imagery (the impact of which is lost on the small screen) and the dialogue between the girl and the droid via the computer

terminal. The various tv/video images which pop up from time to time are quite arresting and the whole movie is hung on an excellent soundtrack, much to the credit of *Simon Boswell*.

The gore scenes are few but well executed, particularly the (appropriate) eye-ball poking of Lincoln and a scene where the apartment block concierge gets cut in two by some metal doors. Although some critics have been surprised that the film passed the censors intact (on video) there isn't any groundbreaking here for gorehounds and no signs of the BBFC letting up on their stringent controls.

The result is a film that could have been so much better if only the script had demanded more of those involved. It's a case of too much surface over too little substance and too many good ideas that were thrown in but not developed. Oh, if you're looking for Iggy Pop, forget it. He was on tour at the time of shooting and 'appears' in voice only.

AK



Black Sunday image: David Joyce

M k u l t r a

David Joyce takes us for trip down memory lane to the halcyon days of the Movie Serial

Television Syndrome "Fourteen Hours to Save the Earth"

I remember with fondness, long hot summer mornings when the TV used to show those exciting archive serials of Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers. Now, some years later, I know they're not as old as I imagined, and the summers are no longer hot or long.



The movie serial, a phenomenon of early cinema, ceased to exist long before I was born. And yet because of them such heroes as Dick Tracy, Zorro and of course Flash Gordon, became household names. For the first time, perennial favourites like Batman, Captain America, Superman, Tarzan etc, were bought to life for moviegoers everywhere, searching for an escape from boring every day chores. The very first movie serial was *What Happened to Mary?* (1913) released by the Edison company, who had previously produced the first screen adaption of Frankenstein in 1910 (the monster in the film was played by

Charles Ogle who also starred in this premier production). Mary is an innocent whose inheritance is desired and sought after by the villain, thus creating the standard story line for silent chapterplays. Unlike the popular serials of later years, each episode was a story unto itself. But what transpired was a success and was followed by *Who Will Marry Mary?* (1913). The movie serial had started and was to provide entertainment to millions over the next forty-three years. In 1914 *The Perils of Pauline* was produced starring Pearl White 'the Serial Queen', and the concept of the cliffhanger was born. Now our heroes

clung desperately to high cliffs (hence the phrase), careered in black limousines towards high-speed crashes, waited breath held, for death by the villain's glinting dagger or were dangled precariously above crocodile infested waters where pleas for mercy were ignored. Then, the following week, as audiences scrambled back to see our hero's escape, the film appeared to have stretched, and an extra portion containing our hero's miraculous survival had been secretly inserted. Ah, no matter, the punters just loved it, look at them lapping it up. Sophisticated audiences of today may laugh at the pure farce, but they still

appeal to fresh young viewers and buffs alike if they are ever able to see them.

The popularity of these cliffhangers that guaranteed chewed-down nails and a week's baited breath, produced too numerous a number of serials to name here. But I would like to take a brief trip down memory lane to re-visit those famous silver shorts worn so well by the dashing, muscle-filled torso of Flash and Buck, alias Larry 'Buster' Crabbe.

Deep in the Depression, the US needed a hero and along came Flash Gordon. He first appeared in cartoon strip version in 1934, the brainchild of Alex Raymond. The set of characters that inhabited Flash's world were Dale Arden (Jean Rogers), his fellow passenger on a bi-plane that gets hit by a comet in chapter one; Dr 'Alexis' Zarkov (Frank Shannon), the bearded eccentric professor who forces Dale and Flash into his strange rocket after the two have bailed out of their damaged aircraft. It is their intention to journey into space, to save the world from collision with an unknown planet, which they discover to be the planet Mongo, and it's there that they encounter such strange beings as Prince Barin (Richard Alexander), Mongo's answer to Robin Hood and one-time ruler of the planet; King Vultan (John Lipson), the overweight, hirsute ruler of the Hawkmen of Sky City; Prince Thun (James Pierce), Prince of the Lion Men; Princess Aura (Priscilla Lawson), in love with Flash and daughter of the infamous Ming the Merciless (Charles Middleton), the evil, bald-headed ruler of Mongo. And of course, there is Flash Gordon, played by Buster Crabbe. In 1936, Universal Studios realising the potential of Flash Gordon invested a staggering one million dollars into a thirteen episode serial. Even so it is interesting to note that corners had to be cut to keep to that budget. Up popped the tower and laboratory equipment from Universal's *Frankenstein* (1931), props from *The Mummy* (1932) and Fox's *Just Imagine* (1930), as well as the shots of

earth from *The Invisible Ray* (1936). Even silent footage of a ballet where women worship an idol from Universal's *The Midnight Sun* (1927) served as entertainment for Ming's evil on earth. No original musical score was written for Flash Gordon, instead music was used from Tchaikovsky's 'Romeo and Juliet' and Universal's *The Invisible Man* (1933), *Werewolf of London* (1935), *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and *The Invisible Ray*. Filming took place on sets built on the back lot at Universal or the nearby Bronson Canyon (which boasted spectacular 250 feet cliffs that lent themselves perfectly to representing the Mongol landscape). For the part of Flash Gordon, Buster Crabbe's hair was dyed blond so as to match Raymond's original hero. Jean Rogers wore a blond wig for the first series due to the success of Jean Harlow (this was before blond signified temptress).

On Mongo, Flash, Dale and Zarkov encounter a rocket ship not unlike their own. Those bullet-shaped silver machines spouted sparkler fire and white smoke and made a noise not unlike a Van De Graaf generator with thrown-in backfires. It was all stirring stuff. On the planet's mysterious surface our friends are attacked by dinosaur-like creatures who are immediately destroyed by the alien ship. The craft lands and Officer Torch and two heavies arrest the threesome and take them to the Emperor Ming. Ming is a kind of sexually depraved psycho. All it takes is one look and he hates Flash and lusts after Dale. Princess Aura falls in love with Flash who is to fight subhuman wrestlers to the death in the public arena, while Dale is to be Ming's bride. And so the episode closes as Flash is about to be chomped by a monster from outer space. What will happen next? See it here, next week, same time, same theatre.

In the final seconds Princess Aura saves Flash and both go plummeting into a lizard infested pit. Meanwhile Zarkov has convinced Ming not to destroy Earth but to rule it. Ming sets Zarkov to work in Mongo's

laboratories while he prepares to wed Dale. Flash, in love with Dale, dons those famous silver pants and steals a rocket ship (how on Earth, sorry Mongo, did he know how to fly it? That's our hero). In an air battle, he shoots down the ship of Prince Thun. They fight and Flash wins but will not kill the lion-man. Instead, together they plan to overthrow Ming. First though, they must fight Ming's guards and the monster in 'The Tunnel of Terror' played by Glenn Strange (later to be Universal's *Frankenstein* monster three times). The monster threatens to tear Flash limb from limb but alas, to find out for sure, you need to wait until next week.

On and on the adventures go, encountering more weird and wonderful characters in eleven more chapters. In the final episode, Ming's palace is stormed. He flees in terror and apparently commits suicide. Princess Aura and Prince Barin become married and rule the planet as Flash et al rocket on home to Earth. But Flash's adventures were not over yet, and in 1938 he returned in *Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars*. On Mars, Flash Dale and Zarkov encounter once again the maniacal Ming. They become friendly with the clay people, who have been transformed to their present condition by the evil Queen Azura (Beatrice Roberts) who befriends Ming and falls in love with Flash - surprise, surprise (seems to be a conflict of interests there). A Nitrogen Lamp is ridding Earth of its precious nitrogen. Flash, with the help of Prince Barin, defeat the forest people, destroy the Nitrogen Lamp and cure the clay people. Finally, Ming destroys Azura and threatens to do likewise to Mars. Realising his intent a Martian, who had been loyal to the two megalomaniacs, forces Ming at raypoint into the disintegration chamber and zaps him into nothingness. Meanwhile Flash and friends escape to earth (have you heard that before?).

Before Flash had ever been conceived as a comic strip, Buck Rogers - 2429 AD had been written in comic format as early as 1929 by Philip Nolan. In 1939 Buck Rogers became a 12 part

M k u l t r a

serial again starring Buster Crabbe in the title role. The costumes may be different, even Buster's hair may have changed colour (or rather shade as this, with all the early serials, were filmed in black and white), but the style, the sets, the props and the music mean it is re-working of Flash again. However, the story is a little more interesting: Buck and Buddy (Jackie Moran) crash their aircraft, filled with a new gas called Nirvano, in the Arctic. They subsequently breathe in the gas and

intelligent humanoids even more lowly than the robots. In the last episode Saturn's air force defeats Killer Kane and his thugs.

Despite Buck Rogers' success, it was simply Flash Gordon thinly disguised, and so Flash is exhumed in 1940 for Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe. The costumes and sets were the most lavish yet and Crabbe again played Flash, Middleton takes up his role as Ming and Shannon as Zarkov. This time Dale was played by Carol

Gordon. Conquers the Universe is well-filmed and beautifully set, progressing in sophistication from its predecessors. A lot of the Mongol landscapes were filmed in the barren Frigia, with footage inserted from the documentary *White Hell of Pitz Palu* (1930). In the last ever Flash Gordon episode, Doom of the Dictator, Ming and his cronies crash their ship into a tower packed with explosives. The hisses subside, the cheers win through and the evil tyrant is finally gone for good. Flash



sleep, suspended in animation for 500 years. They discover, upon waking in the twenty-fifth century, that Earth is ruled by the despot Killer Kane (Anthony Ward). The time-travellers are then taken to the Hidden City where they meet Dr Huer (C. Montague Shaw) and Wilma Deering (Constance Moore). The story takes our hero to Saturn where he meets the alien Saturians, the zombie race of servile humans, known as the Robot Battalion, and the Zuggs, low

Hughes, Prince Barin by Roland Drew, Princess Aura, Barin's wife, by Shirley Deane and Captain Torch by Don Rowan.

In the first episode our courageous three return to Mongo to find Ming re-integrated and master of the universe. They befriend the Rock Men whose speech Zarkov recognises as that of a tribe from the Gobi Desert on earth (in fact in Mongolia, wow!). In reality the Rock People speak backwards, as does the professor in return. Much of Flash

returns Barin to his rightful place as ruler of Mongo, and all's well that ends well.

Buck Rogers returned in the late 1970s with Buck Rogers in the 25th Century (1979) amidst a post Star Wars gadgetry and special effects, but it failed to hit the mark as well as the earlier version had done. Flash appears again in the entertaining *Flesh Gordon* (1974), a sex-spoof with such characters as Dr Jerkoff, Dale Hardon and so on. The effects are very good

considering its low budget and the film soon attained minor cult success, enough to warrant a sequel (released this year). The awful *Flash Gordon* (1981) is a big budget production with some notable actors - Max Von Sydow as Ming, Topol as Zarkov, Timothy Dalton as Barin (with side-kick Richard O'Brien) and Brian Blessed as Vultan. But the biggest setback is the rather bad casting of the dumb blond, Sam Jones, as Flash and it also features a dreadful soundtrack by Queen. Mediocre copies aside, movie serials

have attracted imitation by top movie makers. George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977) and its subsequent sequels were inspired by movie serials, even down to the opening resume of events so far. If *Star Wars* changed the face of special effects, then Steven Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) changed the pace of action movies forever. Thrill-a-minute stuff, Spielberg readily admits the influence of early movie serials. It could even be said that Ian Fleming's James Bond owes a great deal to the serial hero,

who is believed dead but amazingly survives to fight another day. Gone, maybe, are the cliffhangers, but today's fast society demands answers quickly and they don't want to wait a week.

So, you fans of the quickfire, exhilarating, never say die, contemporary film such as *Robocop*, *Terminator* etc, take a quick dip into nostalgia - to where these movies owe everything to Buck and Flash and their adventures.

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